The Gospel in the Book of Joshua

THE
GOSPEL IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.



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"All these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

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THE attentive reader of God's Word has, doubtless, observed an analogy between the Book of Joshua and the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. The object of this little volume is to direct the mind to that analogy, and to lead the reader to search more deeply into the truths which are illustrated by the book of Joshua.

"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (types, *margin*): and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1 Cor. x. 11.)

THE

GOSPEL IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

IT is generally accepted, that the Book of Joshua consists of two sections. The first, ch. i. to xii., gives the record of the conquest of the land; the second, ch. xiii. to xxiv., of the distribution of the land among the tribes.

The first section begins with an exhortation to possess, and after the words, "And the land rested from war," ends with the numbering up of victories. The second section begins with the word of the Lord, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed," and closes with Joshua's warning to the people, and with the account of his death.

The first is vigorous with divine energy. It is power, strength in the Lord, and in the power of His might; and the failures recorded in it, are failures in action. The second is chiefly inaction—and inaction is of itself failure —yet, instances of zeal for the Lord are to be found in it. This rise and fall tells in few words the history of every

era, in which responsibility to maintain their position has been entrusted to God's people, who, alas, after beginning their course full of zeal, self-denial, and the spirit of victory, have often sunk down into premature rest; and, as a necessary consequence, have become indifferent and worldly.

And if, in this state of indifference, the spirit of self-confidence gains a place, restoration, if effected, is wrought by God through discipline.

May we receive and be energized by the healthful instruction which this Book contains, for its teachings are peculiarly fitted for our luxurious day.

I.

THE LEADER.

"Moses My servant is dead; now, therefore, Arise."—Joshua i. 2.

IN the wisdom of God, the Scripture histories of many of the holy men of old present Christ to us under varied types.

Moses typifies Jesus bringing His people out of the land of condemnation, whilst Moses and Aaron typify Jesus Christ leading His people through this wilderness world. Moses did not lead Israel into Canaan. Joshua, who typifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Captain of our salvation, was appointed for that service.

In the book which is before us, Moses, "the drawn out," Jehovah's servant appointed to bring forth His people out of Egypt, has passed from the scene. Jehovah has buried him, and hidden the place of his sepulchre to this day. (Deut. xxxiv. 6.)

Joshua takes his place, and the name of Joshua is also significant. Originally he was called Oshea (Deliverance), but this was increased to Jehoshua, or Joshua, which means "The Lord's salvation."

Moses was dead, and Joshua was Israel's divinely appointed leader, therefore Israel's path of obedience and blessing was in following their new captain.

The lessons of the book of Joshua, spiritually considered, refer to the Christian's heavenly calling. Here, under the captaincy of his risen Lord, the Christian may see himself. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above." (Col. iii. 1.)

II.

EXHORTATION.

"Moses, my servant, is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea towards the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee, all the days of thy life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

"Be strong and of good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them.

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all my law, which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

"Have I not commanded thee?

"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."—Joshua i. 2—9.

IT is an unfailing principle, that Scripture exhortations are founded on grace.

God is the God of all grace, therefore, what He exhorts His people to do, He gives them power to perform.

Perhaps in no portion of God's word is greater grace to be found than in His exhortations; for the object of them is to bring His people nearer to Himself, and to lead them more deeply into their privileges.

In the moving exhortation which we have just read, the basis is, that the land belongs to Israel according to promise; and thus, because God had given them the land, He bids them "Arise, and possess it." When this exhortation was given, Israel was brought, by sovereign grace and forbearing kindness, to the very borders of the land of promise. Its glories spread themselves before their eyes—the corn fields, olives, vineyards, and the mountains out of which they shall "dig brass." Already, by anticipation, "the brooks of water and depths that spring out of valleys and hills," were theirs, and one thing only was requisite to the enjoyment of their portion; they must "Arise," and possess. It was harvest time—the time of the year's richest good—and Jordan (that is, the river of Death or of Judgment) threatened to bar their way, for "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." Yet faith would lay hold on the word of the living God, and, regardless of the difficulty, obey that word immediately.

Now, beholding the corn fields was not eating the fruits, and gazing on the mountains was not digging out their wealth; and the one condition which the Lord imposed upon the people was, that they, as a matter of

fact, should enter and have foot-hold on the land which He had given them.

How true is it, regarding spiritual possession, that no, what may be termed, geographical acquaintance with the truth of God, no ability to map out doctrines or dispensations, is of itself possession. Real possession becomes the portion of those who have, by individual contest, step by step, won ground; and to them is the promise, "Every place that the sole of your feet shall tread upon, that have I given you."

In order to stimulate His people to gain their possession, the Lord graciously promised His unfailing presence, strength, and nearness to them in the conflict. The Lord had not forgotten their fears at Eschol. He knew that the sons of Anak trod the land still, and that cities great and high, walled to heaven, filled the country; and, in His grace, He would so encourage His people, that they should learn to measure the sons of Anak by Jehovah's strength instead of by their own, and the walled cities by His power, and not by the fitness of their weapons of war.

The strength that Jehovah desired in His people was strength of hand for taking and firmly retaining; and strength of knees so that the wrestler should not be cast down. And we Christians are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high

places," which are to us like the hosts of Canaan were to Israel. Neither must we rest contented in the fact of overcoming a foe; "for having done all," or as the margin reads, "having overcome all," we are called upon "to stand." (Eph. vi.) The walled city may be taken, but, like sentinels at their post, we must "stand," if we hope to retain it.

God, by giving exhortation and encouragement, warns us of danger and difficulty. But, beloved reader, if we shrink from the difficulty, let us remember that we shrink from the land of promise. What! shall a Christian sit down on the wilderness side of Jordan, because of Canaan's giants?

Again, the Lord calls upon His people for strength and for courage. And this time it is that they may obey *all* His word. Not the slightest deviation is permitted. It is a straight road, and one step aside would lead astray altogether; "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." His word was not to depart out of their mouth, "It is written" was to decide everything; and it was to be their meditation, both by day and by night,—their continual study. Prosperity and success would be theirs as they obeyed God's word.

And, fellow Christians, here is a good occasion to be plain with ourselves. Why is one without full peace with God? Why has another leanness of soul? Why has another trouble instead of joy? The Word of God is not implicitly followed, the plain path of Scripture has been overstepped.

A third time, we have the Lord saying, "Be strong, and of a good courage." The first time, because all is of grace; the second, because the Word is His; and now, because His own authority is our commission. Once let the Christian lay hold of the fact of the divine authority of the Word of God, and forthwith all that is human must bow.

With the promise "The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest," the exhortation closes; for it would not be possible to obey His command unless blessed with His presence.

III.

ADMONITION.

"Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go to possess the land, which the Lord God giveth you to possess it."—Joshua i. 10, 11.

THERE is something contrastive with human ways in the people of Israel being bidden to tarry three days after receiving such a stirring exhortation as that which has just been given to them.

They have to prepare food, and wait a perfect period of time, and not rush on impetuously; and thus it is, that having removed from the last stage of their wilderness way—Shittim—Joshua, and all the people lodge on Jordan's banks before they pass over.

We have to learn that human energy cannot cross rivers of death, or break down the walls of this world's strongholds, and that should we be stirred up to follow the Lord, it must be in His time as well as according to His word. Impulse is not faith, and going forward in the mere strength of our own acquired knowledge of God's truth, will surely manifest itself to be impulse.

God has His own time. He is not in haste, and He would neither have His people act in fleshly zeal, nor in

the excitement of freshly gained knowledge. Right actions may be wrought at wrong times, and well would it be if some that love their Lord, instead of pushing on in the impulse of newly-acquired truth, would first tarry their three days and digest it—make it, by the grace of God's Spirit, thoroughly their own. Unless we make the truth of God part of ourselves, as it were, our weakness will betray itself in the day of testing. That knowledge of the divine word which does not sink down deep into the heart, will not stay the soul when its support is most needed; it will be found then that such knowledge was of an exterior kind; and that, therefore, we cannot use it. To learn as a matter of intelligence a truth of God from another, without having experienced the force of it in our own souls, is knowledge without power.

In drawing instruction from this literal history let us not, however, suppose that a set interval of time is necessary to effect a needed exercise of soul, for God can and does work in some in a short period, what it is His pleasure to accomplish in others by a life-long lesson.

IV.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.

JOSHUA, ch. ii. & vi.

"By faith, the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace."—Heb. xi. 31.

HOW fitting in the order of the book before us, is the place which this gospel history occupies.

We see in Rahab a monument of mercy, and a pattern for us, who learn in her, that salvation reaches to the chief of sinners.

In common with her townspeople, Rahab had heard the message of coming judgment, and she with them had feared exceedingly, accrediting in the pilgrim Israelites Jehovah's mighty host. But, as judgment delayed its march, the proud men of Jericho counted it slackness, and hardened themselves in their iniquity. Rahab partook not of their spirit, for, in the interval of delay, she set her mind upon deliverance. When we find souls trembling to-day lest they should be destroyed with this wicked world, and to-morrow, when their trembling has ceased, pursuing their wicked paths, they remind us of the iron which grows harder and harder by heating in the furnace until, at length, the blows of the hammer will scarcely leave an impression. But judg-

ment must come, and the hardened sinner will have to prove it, even as did the defiant men of Jericho.

Let us follow the two spies. The long threatened judgment is at the walls of the city, its heralds enter it, and are received into Rahab's house. She hails them as messengers of mercy, but her townspeople guided by their king seek their life.

The word from on high is judgment to the world, "Now is the judgment of this world;" but to the individual sinner the message is deliverance. To each house, to each sinner, where the herald of God comes, the salutation is "Peace," peace through the blood of Christ, and all who accept the message of God are saved from the wrath to come. Woe, indeed, is it to such as reject God's message of mercy, for thereby they close upon themselves the only door of escape. Such as feel their need, and own the just judgment of God upon this wicked world, hail His messengers with joy. It was Rahab's faith that saved her, and Jericho's unbelief was its doom. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies in peace." (Heb. xi. 31.)

To look back and behold the destruction of Jericho, and the salvation of Rahab out of it, is deeply solemn and instructive to us, who live in these last days of God's long suffering. Let us stand then with Rahab and the two spies upon the flat roof of her house, and looking around learn a lesson for our own times. Mark the development of the city, its recent improve-

ments, its great and high walls, and its brazen gates. As since the creation of the world, the mountains stand in their places. As heretofore, the valleys are golden with ripening corn, the hill sides purple with fruitful vines; for, observe this, it is the time of harvest. The ancient Jordan flows on, his banks covered with deep waters, as if proudly saying, I am a barrier to the enemy's approach. The sun, which they worship, calm in the heavens, sinks beneath the mountains, shedding its rich glow over the valleys, and the people kiss their hand to it. The business of the city, eating flesh and drinking wine, marrying and giving in marriage, birth and death, go on as in former generations. The scoffers in the city say, the tale of judgment has grown old, forty long years ago we heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for these people who claim this land, and there is nothing to fear.

The testimony of the Lord's coming has grown old to the world. The Son of Man coming from the heavens in flaming fire, and the overthrow of the order of things as they now exist upon the earth, do not agree with human notions of stability. "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." This word of God went forth more than eighteen hundred years ago. Judge not, then, by sight,

be not willingly ignorant of the flood, or of the burning of Sodom and the cities of the plain, for if the judgment tarries, it is only for this one reason; "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (Read 2 Pet. ch. iii.) Are we of the City of Destruction, or do we wait for God's Son from heaven, who hath delivered His people from the wrath to come? It matters not in what part of the city we dwell, be it in Morality Street or in the Religious Quarters; it matters not how richly our house be furnished with good deeds, for if we are of the world we are of that place upon which God has pronounced judgment. Men may say, "peace and safety," but while they so speak sudden destruction will come upon them, and they shall not escape. The men of Jericho may scoff at Israel marching round their walls, until, astonished and overwhelmed, they perish in its overthrow.

Rahab's heart is full, for the word of Jehovah is reality to her. By faith she understands that Jericho's days are numbered, its progress at an end, and the last moments of its hour of grace at hand. Her thoughts are not with the townspeople's, her spirit is separate from her native city, she hopes for life elsewhere. In the two spies that are with her on the housetop she beholds the messengers of the "God in heaven above and on earth beneath," and thus their testimony is mightier to her than all the evidence of outward things. To these men she unburdens

her soul, and, if she may, casts in her lot with God's Jericho-hated people.

Rahab was by nature and by practice a child of wrath, even as others. In common with the sinners of her city, she had no title to God's salvation—none, but she believed, and confessed that the Lord's judgment was upon her; she owned that the land in which she dwelt belonged no longer to her people, but to God's people—"I know that the Lord hath given you the land." She owned that the judgment was Jehovah's—"Jehovah your God He is God in heaven above and in earth beneath." Shut up to the terror of this mighty God what was she to do? "Let him take hold of My strength that he may make peace with Me, and he shall make peace with Me." (Is. xxvii. 5.) Rahab appealed to Jehovah's kindness. She trusted in Him and cried for mercy, "Save me or I perish;" this was her burden. Death all around her, death in her, what else could satisfy her save life? "Deliver our lives from death."

Rahab's antecedents, perhaps, account for her telling the falsehood to the king's messengers. This is a matter for reflection. How frequently do we observe some evil tendency, some hateful habit or temper, cling to even earnest believers! A low moral tone is not changed to an exalted one in a day; no, not even by conversion.

The sign that life was Rahab's, was a token outside herself. It was the scarlet line by which the spies escaped from Jericho; and God was satisfied with the token. Beneath its shelter there might have been anxious fears,

or, possibly, strong faith, as the army marched round the city, but it covered all. This line of thread tells us of the blood of Christ, the precious "token" which speaks of God's perfect satisfaction on account of sin. By that precious blood, God can be just and the justifier, for the blood has met His claims on account of sin, and has satisfied His righteous demands. And now God justifies him that believes in His Son from all things.

But Rahab had more than this scarlet line, she had the two living men as her security. Vain would have been the thread bound in her window had the spies not reached the camp! These men had vouched their life for hers, "Our life for yours;" their life was her life. And does not this tell us of the Saviour's assuring words, "because I live, ye shall live also." (John xiv 19.) It is His life which is the believer's life, a life beyond the claims and power of death. Jesus, the Son of God, is the Eternal Life. "He that hath the Son hath life." (1 John v. 12.) By the death of Christ the life of man was judicially ended, and in the life of the ascended One the feeblest believer lives. May you, dear reader, believe in the name of His Son, and have eternal life, for in Adam "we be all dead men." We, who believe, are removed from the judgment of the world; for, since Christ is our life, we are no longer of the city of destruction, but of those who wait for the coming of the Lord to take us out of the world.

What a bright pattern of care for perishing sinners does Rahab offer to us! How earnest was her entreaty

for her father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all their kindred! She spent her opportunity in "bringing home" many, and none of them were left to perish in the overthrow of Jericho.

She herself was a testimony of mercy, and the scarlet line in her window the evidence of faith. Pointing to the scarlet line, she might tell them, that by it the men left the city, and that they had pledged their life for hers, and for the lives of all who remained beneath its shelter.

Let us now turn to boastful, unbelieving Jericho. The Jordan rolls back, and God's hosts surround it. It shuts itself up in iron determination, allowing none to go out and daring any to enter. Formed in divinely-chosen array, God's host encompasses it. The trumpeters are there, as if anticipating "the acceptable year of the Lord." To Jericho a vain sound, fit only for taunt and ridicule. What! shall men marching round and round overthrow a kingdom! Now comes the seventh day, with its sevenfold herald notes, with its stirring in the camp, and its "getting up early." It is the last day for Rahab's house to offer shelter. Before eventide the people of Jericho must perish.

All is silence. The city is encompassed. The captain of the host gives the word. The shout of victory rends the unbelieving hearts. Jericho's walls totter and fall. It is sudden destruction. The sword devours old and young, rich and poor. The city is destroyed by fire. The pride of Jericho is no more.

Reader, yet once more the question, Are you of the world? This very world is a "city of destruction." Behold in Jericho's fate its certain end.

But Rahab, where is she? Safe, saved? She was safe the moment she believed. The sinner is saved immediately he believes. Alive in the midst of death? Yes, life was hers when the spies bonded their life for hers. "And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, and she dwelleth in Israel, even unto this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

But where shall be found the historian to chronicle the length of stay of those who enter their heavenly inheritance? "They shall go no more out." (Rev. iii. 12.)

V.

THE CHRISTIAN STANDING.

JOSHUA, ch. iii. & iv.

"They went through the flood on foot."—Ps. lxvi. 6.

"What ailed thee * * * thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back."—Ps. cxiv. 5.

ISRAEL'S passage of the Jordan is usually considered a figure of the believer's entrance into heaven after death, but there is more in it than simply this.

Israel were delivered from the judgment on Egypt by the Passover. At the passage of the Red Sea, Pharaoh's pursuit was brought to its close, and Israel were delivered from his power. They passed dryshod through the waters which had threatened to become their tomb, and therein their pursuer and his host were buried. They were freed from Egypt and its king, and set on the far shore, a pilgrim band bound for Canaan. But the passage of the Red Sea did not bring them into Canaan; this was accomplished by crossing the Jordan.

Before passing the stream, the people were, first to observe the ark; and, secondly, to sanctify themselves.

In the wilderness, if the ark abode beneath its curtains, the people remained in their tents; if it went forward, they followed. And now, as they are about to

tread a path hitherto untrodden—a way of which they have no knowledge—in an especial manner, they must observe the leadings of the ark, that they "may know the way by which they must go," "for ye have not passed this way heretofore." Yet while they were to observe the ark and follow it, they were not to "come near unto it," but to leave a set distance between it and them, a measured space of two thousand cubits.

In the second place, they were to sanctify themselves, because of the "wonders" which the Lord would on the morrow work among them.

The ark typifies Christ. The path of faith is of necessity a path that is ever new to God's people, and it is simply by looking unto Jesus that any of us "know the way by which we must go." Israel were not to press upon the ark, and the Christian must give the Lord Jesus full place, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. (Col. i. 18.) There is a divine distance between Him and His people. If the people had not left a space between themselves and the ark, the fore-ranks would have prevented those that followed from seeing it. And the Christian must ever have a full view of Christ, if he would walk in God's way.

But how shall we follow Christ? "Sanctify yourselves," was the word of God to Israel, how much more then to us! Truly, there can be no following the Lord Jesus, save with holy footsteps. No approaching God's "wonders," save as Moses approached the bush. Then how shall we "sanctify ourselves?" Our only sanctifi-

cation is Christ—"Who of God is made unto us * * * sanctification." (1 Cor. i. 30.) There is no power for separation from evil save by Christ. And the more closely we look into the Jewish ceremonial sanctification, the more evidently do we see that all pointed to Christ.

The ark of the Lord, at the passage of the Jordan, was called "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth." The Lord Jesus said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. xxviii. 18), for the Father has committed every thing into His hands.

The river Jordan barred Israel's entrance into Canaan. Except by that river, God had no way for His people into the promised land. When Israel reached the borders it was harvest time, and "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest;" thus, the stream was swollen into a mighty torrent, and stretched its broad waters over the valley. We can easily imagine the host of Israel, with the "men of war," the women, and the little ones, crowded near its brink; and can picture to ourselves the ark of the Lord, borne by the Levites, two thousand cubits in front of the host. Every eye is fixed upon the ark of the Lord, for all are fully aware that if they are to get into Canaan, it must be by the ark. Surely none among that vast company doubt for a moment the power of God; nay, rather they are expecting to see His "wonders" wrought in their presence.

And thus, "As they that bare the ark were come unto the Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark, were dipped into the brim of the water, * * * *

that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, which is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed and were cut off." In the Dead Sea the River of Death was swallowed up. And the threatening tide of rolling-in waters stood up upon an heap before the ark of the Lord. Was there among that company one heart that feared lest the "swellings of Jordan" should overwhelm him? Before one drop of the tide could touch the feeblest Israelite, God's ark must have been swept away.

"Until all the people were passed clean over Jordan," the ark stood before the heaped-up waters; but, when the "priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land, the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks as they did before." This is a figure of the Lord holding back the out-pouring of judgment until His people be first all gathered home. Solemn consideration for him who knows not Christ as the One who delivers from death! Oh, consider that the long pent-up waters of judgment will assuredly sweep over this earth in irresistible power, and if the last of the host passes before you, and you are left behind, how shall you then find your entrance into the land of light and love beyond? May God in His mercy give you, dear reader, to pass over while the way is still open.

God allowed Israel no way through the Jordan except that which His ark made. Israel had, thirty-eight years before, in self-will, endeavoured to fight their way into

Canaan, they had tried their unbelieving utmost to reach it—but in vain; and the Lord now showed them His way must be trodden in the strength of the ark alone. If an Israelite could not gain the earthly inheritance by his own strength, how shall the sinner gain heaven by his own efforts?

Now, like a Jordan, death bounds this wilderness world, through which men are journeying, and there is no ford, no ferry, no bridge, whereby we can cross the stream. Sooner or later each of the children of men must come to the brink of the river, but none shall enter the land of life beyond, save by God's own chosen way.

As in the figure before us, Israel's course, as murmuring and unbelieving wanderers, ended in the Jordan, so our history, as men in the flesh, terminates in the sight of God, in the death of His Son. In the grace and power of God, what the Son accomplished He accomplished for all and for each of His people. The Lord and His people are "planted together" (we could not say united, for death does not unite) in death. They occupy the same place—we are "dead with Christ." It is the believer's comfort to realize this; for when we know that in the sight of God we are judicially dead, and that He looks not upon us in our natural condition, but in His Son only, our doubts and fears are buried, and we are enabled to "reckon ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The same power which carried the priests who bore

the ark dryshod through the river, was effectual in the passage of the least of the host. The ark and the people were identical. Christ has gone down into death and emptied it of its power, as the ark of the Lord exhausted Jordan's stream; and it is by Him that every believer enters the heavenly land beyond. If we are "planted together" with Christ in the likeness of His death, we are united to Him in His life. Because He lives, we live also. We are "saved by His life." (Rom. v. 10.) "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) Christ, our ark, has brought His people clean through the river of death into the promised land. In Christ, the believer is, as it were, on the far side of Jordan, and at rest in Canaan. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.)

It may be well to place together the three great Symbols of the Passover, the Red Sea, and the Jordan.

From the night of the Passover we learn of the work of Christ as the Spotless Lamb, whose precious blood has answered every claim which justice had against us, and "has delivered us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess. i. 10.)

From the night of the Red Sea we learn God's glorious work in delivering His people from the power of Satan. Pharaoh would have snatched blood-bought Israel from Jehovah's hand if he could; he tried his utmost. But when the morning came, Jehovah looked through the

pillar of fire and cloud upon the pursuer and his host, and they cried "Let us flee;" "Jehovah fights for His people against the Egyptians." Then the sea returned upon them, "There remained not so much as one of them." (Ex. xiv. 25, 28.) Thus, in Jehovah's strength, the six hundred thousand of Israel passed dryshod through the sea, and sang on its far shore, "the Lord hath triumphed gloriously;" the women answering the song with timbrels and dances. And more than this song of freedom, they, by faith ascribing all the work of their blessing to Jehovah, spake as if they were already in Canaan; "Thou, in Thy mercy, hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them by Thy strength unto Thy holy habitation." (Ex. xv. 13.)

When the Lord rose from the dead, the power of Satan, the pursuer of the Lord's people, was overthrown. From that triumphant morning, the song of victory has been sung by every believer who has known the Saviour as his Deliverer. And, by faith, every believer can say not only that he is "redeemed," but that, notwithstanding the intervening wilderness, he is brought by God's "strength" into the heavenly places—His "holy habitation."

When Israel began to tread the wilderness, their strong faith changed to unbelief. Their enemies, indeed, were dead, but self was in full activity; and, they became so occupied with themselves, that they forgot their great deliverance and their song of triumph at the Red Sea.

They reached the Jordan in the morning, and crossed

over in full daylight. We read of no shouts of victory accompanying the passage,—no timbrels nor dances, but a solemn stillness appears to pervade the host as they observe the Lord's ark go down for them into the flood.

In the full clear light of this scene, we learn death to self and life with Christ. We learn that the same Almighty Saviour, who shed His precious blood for His poor enthralled people; and who, by His own strength, overthrew their enemies; has, in the power of His life, brought them into the heavenly places. It is blessed, indeed, to realize, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the greatness of Christ's work for His people as shadowed in the passage of the Red Sea, and our standing in Christ as set forth in the passage of the Jordan.

Before the Jordan was crossed, Jehovah said to Joshua, "This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel;" and when they had passed over, "On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel, and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life." (Ch. iv. 14.)

God the Father magnifies the Lord Jesus as the Victor over death; and the Lord is never thoroughly honoured by God's people, until the greatness of His work in resurrection is apprehended.

When all the people were passed over Jordan, the Lord bade Joshua—"Take you twelve men out of the people, out of every tribe a man, and command ye them, saying, Take you hence out of the midst of Jordan, out of the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones,

and ye shall carry them over with you, and leave them in the lodging place where ye shall lodge this night."

These twelve stones represented all the people of Israel, one stone for each tribe; and being taken from the depths of the Jordan, they told of the work of God, who, by His ark, had brought the people over. These stones were set up in the land, a sign that all Israel was one family—that Jehovah's twelve tribes were one people. A sign also, (being set up in the promised land), that the manifested union of the tribes was effected in Canaan. Some of Israel's tribes might choose their dwelling on the wilderness side of Jordan—they might not practically come up to the full measure of blessing which the land of promise offered to them; but their stones were set up in the promised land, and, despite the poverty of their faith, they were one with their brethren there.

Israel was built up in manifested unity in Canaan; the church is One body in the heavenly places. No tribes, no divisions, neither Jew nor Gentile are recognized in it. "We are quickened together * * * * raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This oneness is effected by the Holy Ghost, as the result of the work of Christ. We are members of each other, being members of His body.

If any members of the Church of God (like the two and a half tribes of Israel who chose a portion short of the promised land) choose a position which practically denies the oneness of the body, still, being united to

Christ, they are of the undivided company. They lose the enjoyment of their portion, so long as they live below their privileges, it is true; but they cannot defeat God's counsel, or mar His purpose of blessing them. And though, on this earth, divisions spoil the beauty of God's Church, yet, in the glory, it shall be found that not one member is lacking. When, by faith, the Body is beheld in its divine and heavenly beauty, the Christian can look calmly on the divisions of Christendom, and can undismayed regard its schisms—for Christ is not divided—and can pity the vanity of endeavouring to form a union on the wilderness side of Jordan, as it were—a union which is not heavenly, nor in the power of Christ's resurrection.

The twelve men carrying upon their shoulders the stones from the Jordan, also illustrate what the condition of the Lord's risen people should be as they walk through this world. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) As the representatives of the twelve tribes trod the promised land, bearing the stones upon their shoulders, they testified not merely that they were brought into Canaan, but also of the way by which they entered it. The life of Jesus is not made manifest in us by our simply saying, we are risen with Him; but by a denial of self, a dying to the world, through the power of His death.

These stones were set down at Gilgal, and became a

" memorial unto the children of Israel for ever :" and how much more should the death and resurrection of the Son of God be the one and only memorial for every believer! " When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ' What mean these stones ?' then ye shall let your children know, saying, ' Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us, until we were gone over ; that all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty : that ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.'" Thus were Israel to answer the question, " What mean ye by these stones ?" which would naturally arise in the minds of many in after days. Should any inquirer put a similar question to us concerning our salvation, we can boldly reply, Christ died and rose again ; by Him we have come dryshod through the river of death ; and not only has His death and resurrection freed us for ever from our enemies, but it has also freed us from ourselves; and now it is the happy, yes, glorious portion of every believer in the Lamb once slain, to testify to the exceeding greatness of God's power to them that believe.

Has the lapse of a short eighteen hundred years drawn away God's people from the ground of the Christian faith ? Are other signs required now, signs which the early Church would have scorned ? It is a sad fact for every faithful heart, that human reason, and humanly invented religious machinery, have marred the simple and bold

testimony to the work of Christ. Yet, be the answer which God's people give to their children what it may, a crucified, and risen, and ascended Son of God is the alone foundation of faith, as every sinner saved will some day testify. May we be witnesses for God in this matter! (Read 1 Cor. xv. 1 to 4, and 14, 15.)

Before leaving this scene of Jehovah's "wonders" let us note this word; "And Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood, and they are there unto this day." The ascended Son of God never forgets the people for whom He died. He never forgets His death. The deep waters, where His almighty feet "stood firm" are present to Him and to His God and Father. From the throne on high He remembers the cross.

May we, who, in Him, have trodden the wondrous way of which human reason had no knowledge, and who have in Him entered the heavenly places, while enjoying the unspeakable blessing of life in the risen and exalted Son of God, abide in the remembrance of His death—look, by the power of the divine Spirit, into the deep waters!

VI.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel a second time. * * * And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised; but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord; unto whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land, which the Lord swore unto their fathers that He would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. And their children, whom He raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised; for they were not circumcised, because they had not circumcised them on the way. * * *

"And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (that is, Rolling or Liberty) unto this day."—Josh. v. 2—9.

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God * * *; mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth."—Col. iii. 3, 5.

THE more a man learns of God, the more he knows of grace. If we would apply to ourselves spiritually the lessons of the circumcision in the land, we must give the grace of God, which led to the circumcision, full place,

and remember that God asks for the devotion of His people, because He has, in Christ, brought them into perfect favour; otherwise, we shall fall into the error of monk-like minds, and, with them, wrong God, by seeking to attain that favour through our own efforts.

Was it by observing God's ordinances, or was it through God's almighty grace that Israel entered the land of promise? They entered it as a nation in uncircumcision, and, therefore exclusively by God's sovereign grace. The people of Israel were circumcised before the judicial sentence was passed upon the men of war at Eschol, where they slighted God's grace, and had therefore forty years of wandering in the wilderness assigned to them. During these forty years the nation neglected circumcision. God, therefore, regarding His people as a whole, now He had brought them into the land of promise, bade Joshua "circumcise again the children of Israel a second time."

God made no demand upon Israel for circumcision so long as they wandered "by the way," but when He brought them into the land, then ("at that time") He required it. And why did God not seek for circumcision from the people of Israel, so long as they walked in the wilderness? The wilderness was the scene of their distrust of God. While there they doubted His promise of bringing them into His land, and were not therefore in a condition warranting that entire separation to Himself which circumcision signified. But now, being brought by God's own faithfulness, and we may say, almost in spite

of themselves, into the land of promise, and, because they were there, doubting no longer, God could call upon them for circumcision. Grace had delivered them from the unbelief of their hearts—grace had brought them into the land, and God could call them into full nearness to Himself, and, consequently, into entire separation from the rest of the nations.

A distrusting spirit is ignorant of God's real character, and consequently is not morally fitted for separation to Himself; but God, having brought us by his grace to know ourselves to be in the heavenly places in Christ, seeks separation to Himself, corresponding with the liberty into which He has brought us. Grace known and realized is the only true power for heart separation to God.

"This is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came out of Egypt that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way. * * * And their children, whom Jehovah raised up in their stead them Joshua circumcised; for they were not circumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way."

Here distinction is made between the men of war who came out of Egypt, and those who grew up in the wilderness. The "men of war" that came out of Egypt, "because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord" concerning the promised land, "were consumed in the desert." (Num. xiv. 32, 33.) At Eschol they disbelieved God's promise of bringing them into the land, and then added to their sin of unbelief that of self-will, self-will even to going up to the land of promise in their own

disobedient energy. Such men of war God rejected, and instead of these, He raised up in the wilderness others, whom He trained, by discipline, for Himself.

Israel learned death to their men of war that came out of Egypt by a long and painful process ;—one by one, for forty weary years, they dropped down and died, until they were all consumed. And slowly, very slowly, the strength and vigour which we brought up out of the world dies in us, as God disciplines, chastens, and teaches us what we are. This lesson is not learned in a day. It is a lifelong experience, and, in a sense, occupies all our "forty years" of pilgrimage. Yet this teaching is blessed, for the same hand which "consumes" "raises up in the stead of" that which it withers. In the very place of discipline, that is, this wilderness world, God quickens in His people new powers ; as self dies, the life of Christ manifests itself. The process is painful, but the end is blessed. God consumes our fleshly zeal in grace, so that His own power may dwell in us.

Circumcision with Israel was merely a carnal ordinance, and, in common with all ordinances, gave neither power for communion with God, nor for conflict with His enemies. It was a sign that the children of Israel were God's earthly family, and a people separated from all the rest of mankind. The circumcision made without hands, with which the Christian is circumcised, in Christ, is a separation to God from the whole world. God had brought His people, Israel, into His own land, and this being their position before Him, of necessity, to satisfy

His own character, He required in them a suited condition. He could not, without compromising Himself, permit His people to be like the rest of mankind. "Holiness becometh thine house, Oh Lord, for ever." (Ps. xciii. 5.) It is a principle in Scripture, that the nearer the relationship to Himself into which God graciously brings His people, the more stringent the call made upon them for separation from evil.

God first brought Israel through Jordan into Canaan, and then he bade them be circumcised. As Israel were by the river of Jordan separated to God, from Egypt, the wilderness, and their old "men of war," so the Christian, by the death of Christ, is separated to God from the world and his old nature, whether in its unbelief or energy. And because we have new life in Christ, we are bidden, in the power of that life, to reckon ourselves dead. In the walk and testimony of the believer, the order of God's word runs thus; "Ye are risen;" "ye are dead." "Ye are risen;" therefore, seek those things which are above, and set your mind on them. "Ye are dead;" therefore, mortify. Ye are risen; Christ is your life; hence the strength for heavenly energy. Ye are dead; Christ died; hence the power for dying to the world and to self. The Christian is, in the sight of God, dead to all that to which Christ died; "our old man is crucified with Christ." (Rom. vi. 6.) But the Christian, although he has divine life, is yet in the flesh. Once he walked in the lust of the flesh; but now, being dead with Christ, he is exhorted to "put off" old nature

vices; "seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." The Adam-nature is called the "old man," which the Christian is said to have "put off." Such as are not dead with Christ are living in disobedience to God, and are called "the children of disobedience." (Eph. ii. 2; Col. iii. 6.) They are thus called, because they are of their father Adam, the disobedient man.

As the people of Israel, because brought through the Jordan, were enjoined by God to be circumcised, and their careless Wilderness ways were allowed no longer; so the Christian, because he has died with Christ to the world, and to his old self, is exhorted to mortify his members, and his worldly ways are no longer permitted. This mortification is simply self-denial, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man naturally loves sin; he loves his own way, which is the essence of sin; but he who lives in Christ is called to die to himself in daily walk and conduct. There is no way of living to Christ, but by dying to self.

The Son of God, seen in the glory, dries up all the sources of our old nature on the one hand, and on the other, energizes the new life. And if the Christian would live up to the measure of that grace wherein he stands—as one alive in the risen Christ, he must remember that he has died with Christ to the world. It would be impossible to glory in the fact of being risen with Christ, unless we were dead with Him. There could be

no seat for the Christian in the heavenly places, unless Christ had hung upon the cross for sin. There could be no dwelling in the cities of the land of promise for the children of Israel, if they had not passed through the River of Death.

That system of Christian doctrine which merely glories in the "life which is hid with Christ in God," and does not treat self as dead, is unpractical. To be practical in our walk upon the earth, we must be as circumcised men; as men who, being dead to the world and self by Christ, mortify their members which are on the earth.

It was by no means sufficient to Israel to know that they went across the Jordan, in order to enjoy the riches of the inheritance; for until circumcision was effected none of Canaan's food was spread before them, nor were they called to conflict. And we may be sure that so long as we walk in the flesh and please ourselves, there can be no communion—no feeding upon Christ. Neither can there be any victories for the Lord, unless self is subdued.

The tendency of man is to give undue prominence to some favourite doctrine, and the sorrow caused by this universal failing is wide spread. God of late has graciously taught His people much truth relative to the life in Christ, and the heavenly calling of the Church; and Satan is busy trying to induce God's people to take up portions only of those truths, that he may introduce false weights into the balances, and so turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Satan would beguile the youthful believer into the misty atmosphere of a Canaan of the imagination, where the flesh is allowed to work. In this aerial Christianity, circumcision—self-mortification—is not permitted; the practical result of being dead with Christ is not allowed to wound the will. But there is no stability of soul, no solid devotedness. Such a believer is like the insect, which, well nigh composed of wings, and possessing scarcely any weight, is driven from the flower garden by the first storm. When God by His Spirit leads such an one into the full clear light of His own presence, there is a holy, watchful self-denial which outweighs all the pretensions of verbal Christianity.

Sorrowful as is the result of letting the imagination carry away the soul, perhaps the effect of accepting divine truth in intellectualism is more so. A Christian holding the doctrine of death with Christ, and resurrection with Christ, in the understanding only, goes out from the sunlight of God's presence into a land of death-like coldness. If he transgress, he exercises not his soul about his sin, but answers, "I am dead." He covers his evil ways with an ice-like mantle of doctrine, and perhaps goes so far in moral distance from God as to say that his Christian character is of little moment compared with his standing in Christ. Alas, this is no fanciful picture; we have seen the tender fruits of God's cultivation roughly trampled upon by men of this spirit. The doctrine has been boasted in, but the virtues which belong to it have been unheeded. It is, indeed, a vain thing to

hold a doctrine in word only; at the best it is no better than the clear shining of the moon on a bleak snow-clad landscape, which cheers no heart, and excites no desire to remain under its influence.

If circumcision in its spiritual signification were rightly valued, such abuses of the truth of God would certainly find no place in the believer's heart. To mortify our members is not a painless exercise. Saying, "We are dead," is not mortifying; but it is to deny the wishes of our old nature because "we are dead." "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.)

The mere fact of the people of Israel's entrance into Canaan did not constitute them at liberty before God. They were brought into the land of promise by the passage of the Jordan, but were not pronounced free by Jehovah until circumcised. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore, the name of the place is called Gilgal (Rolling or Liberty) to this day." God brought His people out of Egypt, through the Wilderness and into the Land of Promise, bade them to be circumcised, and then declared that He had made them free.

God's liberty for His people is that of His own making, and therefore perfect. It is what He thoroughly approves and delights in. And the means by which, step by step, He brings His people into the enjoyment of this liberty, is grace. If we are God's free men, it is evidently in the land of promise that we have liberty, for

only in the fulness of God's favour can we experience His rolling away the reproach of our bondage.

Now every believer in Christ is spiritually over the river of death, and set down in the heavenly places; "all the people are clean passed over," for Christ is risen. It is then a solemn and heart-searching question that the believer may put to himself, Am I one of the Lord's free men? Not only risen with Christ and seated in Christ in the heavenly places, but practically free from the love of the world? Has the death of Christ severed my affections from the world, or is there, as Israel lusted at times for Egypt's food, still a lusting after its attractions? God Himself pronounced His people to be free; their freedom was the result of His own work. His gracious hand had so wrought for them that they had not only passed through the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, but they had circumcised themselves.

Gilgal is the centre of Israel's strength through all the conflicts recorded in the book before us. Thither they repaired; both after victory and defeat, there was the camp. And we need a continual returning to our Gilgal; both in the hour of sorrow, and in the time of prosperity. If we would be true men for the Lord, we must ever hasten to the secret place of strength—holy self judgment in the presence of a once crucified and now ascended Saviour.

As it is a principle so deeply important, let it be repeated, that God exhorts His people to carry out what actually exists. He says, "Ye are dead," "mortify

therefore your members." God places death to our old nature as the starting point; man, in his religious teachings, exhorts to destroy the old nature in order that some day life may be attained, and thus drives souls to despair. Such taskmasters are more relentless than those who beat the bondsmen in Egypt when, their straw taken from them, they pleaded their powerlessness to make the bricks. Bitter is the cry which rises up to God from many of His beloved ones; some, afflicting their bodies in order to purge away their lusts; some, tortured with penances; some, rising up early and late taking rest; and all beaten by spiritual tyrants, and goaded on to their hopeless tasks, with "Ye be idle, ye be idle." Such are trying to destroy their old nature; not knowing that they have been crucified with Christ, and are dead; such are endeavouring to mortify themselves by their own strength, being ignorant of the power of the indwelling Spirit. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." "The flesh profiteth nothing." (Jno. vi. 63.)

It is marvellous, in the face of such plain teaching as that of the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, such spiritual bondsmen can submit to their thrall. Unless the believer had a new nature, he would not be bidden to reckon himself (that is his old nature) dead. When the Christian imposes upon himself the bondage of carnal ordinances, subjects himself to a religious system, which addresses itself to the soul through his senses—through sights, and smells, and sounds—it is evidently

not of faith nor of the Spirit of God. If, by the death of Christ, the Christian is severed from and dead to the rudiments (or elements) of the world, shall he, as if he were living in the world, be subject to ordinances which merely affect the senses of his old nature: "Touch not, taste not, handle not?" Shall he turn from his exalted Head in the heavens, from whom all nourishment is ministered, to such weak and beggarly elements as meats, drinks, holydays, new moons, or sabbaths? Who shall beguile the feeblest of God's free men into a false humility and worshipping of angels? This "show of wisdom" is after the commandments and traditions of men, and not after Christ.

The springs of the believer's life are in God, and not in man; and this simple, yet blessed truth (blessed beyond utterance to those who know experimentally somewhat of the workings of sin within), is the believer's strong tower. There is not a particle of intercourse with God through the channels of the old-Adam nature. When God made these channels they were lovely, and as originally formed, intercourse with God flowed through them. But, when Adam fell—when, in disobedience and independence, he ate of the forbidden fruit—the springs of his nature were corrupted, and the channels broke down. God has never purified the springs, neither has He repaired the channels. He leaves them in ruin. Now, from Christ in the heavens, as from a life-giving fountain, and through the Holy Spirit, as by a channel, nourishment is ministered to God's people on

the earth. The heavenly water feeds the new nature which He has imparted to His people; it ministers nothing to the old nature—it never reaches it. Such as may have observed the wells dug about the sides of Italian hills, which receive their nourishment from the distant fountain, will understand our illustration. There during the long summer months, drought parches the valleys, and to supply the need of the fruit, the peasants dig wells about the hill sides. The wells receive their nourishment from the sky-girt mountain, from the heights of which the exhaustless fountain pours out its waters. The waters of the fountain are, we may say, the life of the wells. And the medium through which the water is received into the wells is a thread-like watercourse, humble to the eye, but all-important. This watercourse reaches from the mountain top to the wells, spanning gullies and edging gorges in its downward course, and brings, with unerring certainty, the bounty of the fountain down to the wells. Like the fountain is our Head in heaven, and like the watercourse, the blessed Spirit of God, who testifies of Him, and communicates of His fulness to God's people.

The Word of God teaches this doctrine, and the experience of the child of God witnesses to its truth. Appealing to this experience, we appeal to the Spirit's testimony to Christ within God's people. Now, what saith this voice? It speaks alone of Christ, Who is our Life, our Fountain, our Strength. Nothing of self, or from self, or in self, aids one bit in knowing, loving, or

enjoying Christ; but, contrariwise, when self is put out of sight, reckoned dead, and forgotten, then the love of God and the power of God fill the earthen vessel. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." (Phil. iii. 3.)

What is it God would have His people use for their self-mortification? It is, we believe, the cross of Christ. Being risen with Him, we have grace to use the fact of His death, as the instrument of severance from what is of self and of the world. The Cross has proved our old man—self,—judicially dead in "sight of God:" "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) When the believer, by God's grace, realizes that he is dead with Christ, there is no longer excuse given for the proneness of the old man to act contrary to God, or allowance for the workings of the flesh, or sanction to sinning. And so far as he walks with God in the power of the life of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, he has grace practically to refuse the inclinations of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity to God still. The world which hated the Son of God, is the world still. Its religion, its rulers, its people, one and all, are opposed to Christ. But has the power of the Cross failed in the hearts and lives of those who are dead to the world and alive to God?

It is vain to say, We are risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenly places, if we walk here as men of the earth. "Ye are dead * * *; mortify, therefore, your members that are on the earth."

VII.

COMMUNION WITH GOD.

JOSHUA, Ch. v. 10—12.

"The children of Israel encamped at Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho."—Joshua v. 10.

EXACTLY forty years before the children of Israel encamped at Gilgal they were slaves toiling in the house of bondage, and God had so arranged their entrance into Canaan, that the first feast they kept there was the remembrance of their deliverance.

The passover and the feast of the passover were distinct; one was the deliverance itself, the other the memorial of the deliverance. In the first, Israel were occupied with their escape, in the other, they meditated upon the means by which God had brought them out.

They now rejoiced before God in a manner impossible heretofore, for being in Canaan they had no destroying angel to fear as in Egypt. And for them who are in Christ Jesus, who have passed from death unto life, there is now no judgment. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Let us keep the feast; let us meditate with thanksgiving upon our ransom, and upon the dying love of our Saviour. God has given our conscience rest, and He would have our affections in constant exer-

cise. In proportion as we contemplate the sacrifice of Christ, our hearts grow in communion with God the Father.

If we had not passed from death unto life we could not remember the death of the Lord Jesus, and the more we know of eternal life in Christ, the greater the value we set upon His death.

There was a testimony in the sight of God when His redeemed people, whom He had brought into the land, kept the passover feast. "And it shall be a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes." (Ex. xiii. 5—10.) And in the remembrance of the death of Christ by His redeemed ones, who are set in Him in the heavenly places, God is glorified.

As Israel encamped in Gilgal, the place of perfect liberty, God spread this table for them in the presence of their enemies—"in the plains of Jericho."

But this was not all; "They did eat of the old corn of the land, on the morrow after the passover, * * * And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." (Josh. v. 11, 12.) Until the land was entered the old corn could not be eaten. The old corn of the land figures the Lord Jesus risen from the dead. Risen with Him, we have entered in Him into the heavenly places, and He is the strength of our souls. If we would grow up into the apprehension of our heavenly inheritance, it must be by our communion

with the ascended Saviour. He is our heavenly object, and we can only in any degree appreciate the riches of the "things above" by intimacy with Him through the grace and power of the Spirit.

The daily need of the believer casts him upon the Lord Jesus, who was once humbled and rejected here. We require suited grace for the day, and must go to Him, who has Himself passed through the wilderness, as the One who can succour and strengthen us, and thus we learn of Him as "the bread from heaven," as the Manna.

As to the mortal body the believer is in the wilderness, but "your life is hid with Christ in God," and the supplies for this life are all found in the person of Christ. We need to know Christ both as the Manna, and as the Old corn of the land.

Unleavened bread accompanies these feasts. "There shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters." "They did eat of the old corn of the land, on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn on the selfsame day." It is impossible to realize the presence of Christ, to feed upon Him, and at the same time for wickedness to be sweet in the mouth, to be hidden under the tongue. When we have communion with Christ, this also is known in "the selfsame day." Let us keep the feast with the "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Henceforth the land of Canaan supplies Israel with food, "they did eat of the fruit of the land that year."

But let us mark the divine order—the old corn first, the fruit of the land afterwards; Christ first, the joys of heavenly things next.

Is there one who reads this page unmindful of heavenly blessings, having no relish for divine things? He has not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious. He is satisfied with the world. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, so does the heart of the worldly man turn from Christ.

Israel's feasts were held yearly, they were but fleeting shadows of the eternal substance. Our feasts are eternal. Our passover is "a feast to the Lord" "for ever," the heavenly corn of our heavenly land food for evermore.

VIII.

VICTORY.

JOSHUA, Ch. v. 13—15, and Ch. vi.

"By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been compassed about seven days."—Heb. xi. 20.

MUCH had to be done for Israel before God could use them as His army, as the passage of Jordan—the circumcision and Gilgal—the passover and the old corn of the land—have, one by one witnessed. The people now go forth to warfare. All the land was given them, but upon the express condition of conquering every foot of it, therefore their responsibility to enter into the fulness of their blessing would not cease until every foe in Canaan, every giant, and every walled city was subdued. Only when all this was done might they sit down and rest.

Joshua, fresh from the feasts of the passover and the first fruits, approaches Jericho, and sees the Captain of the Lord's host, "with his sword drawn in his hand," and, worshipping at his feet, hears that the city, its people, and its king are given into Israel's hand, and learns also what weapons must be used in the warfare.

It should be noted that ver. 1. ch. vi. is a parenthesis, occurring in the midst of the words of the Captain of the Lord's host, which marks the hard and defiant spirit of Jericho; "It did shut up and was shut up" (margin),

"none went out and none came in." "They believed not." (Heb. xi. 21.) This description is, alas, only too true of the spirit which now governs the world. Are we then, day by day, taking our march of faith, despicable as it may seem in the eyes of worldly men, or are we not? Are we among the contemptible company which blows with the rams' horns, or are we among the scoffers upon the high walls of the city of destruction?

Jericho is the world in figure. Egypt also is a figure of the world, but as the "house of bondage," out of which God delivers the sinner by the blood of the Lamb. Jericho is the world as the city of destruction to which, as a soldier of Christ, and in the power of Christ's resurrection, the believer comes to conquer.

The Lord had promised that Israel should be victorious. Their weapon of warfare was faith. "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Faith lays hold of His strength with whom all things are possible, and thus "all things are possible to him that believeth." If cities be "walled to heaven," God sits upon heaven's throne. If the believer's antagonists be "the rulers of the darkness of this world," the Lord of all is his strength. Therefore, whatever the enemies, as they are less than nothing before an almighty God, the soldier of Christ, if acting in reliance upon the Lord, goes forth in full assurance against them; "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The hand of God is not shortened, and He answers prayer for His people now as mightily as when, according to the faith of Israel, the

walls of Jericho fell down: and those who count upon Him for everything, prove by their frequent victories, how well pleasing it is to God when his people place their confidence in Him. "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world."

Joshua gave orders only for the day, although the Lord had allotted seven days for Israel's work of faith. On the first day, he said, "Compass the city * * * once," and thus the final victory promised of the Lord, and not their own day's march, occupied their minds. Let us leave results with God. If we are occupied with the present results of the work which our God has appointed to us, faith is scarcely in exercise. The climax to the believer's work of faith, and the end to which we should look, is the final victory—the day of Jesus Christ.

Israel had to learn patience also in their work of faith, for they had to march seven days around Jericho, and upon the seventh day seven times. If they had not persistently marched on, the wall of Jericho would not have fallen down. And there is a seven-fold, a perfect, trial of faith for the soldier of Christ in his path of obedience. And the Lord frequently passes His people through the discipline of expectation, as He did Israel, that he may bring out the qualities of the soldier in them. "The trial of your faith worketh patience."

Besides the unwavering faith, and the patience of Israel, there was diligence: "Joshua rose up early in the morning," and, on the seventh day, "they rose up about the dawning of the day." Genuine faith, while

it reposes calmly upon God, is never idle. The greater the faith of the soldier of Christ, the more vigorous his energy in his Captain's work. But let us heed the divine order; faith first, energy next. Alas, the order is too frequently reversed. In such energy, self is the source of strength, and God is left out. Faith connects our souls with God, and we cannot exercise faith unless we are in communion with Him. It draws all strength from Him. It is an active, vigorous principle, which never loses sight of its object, yet, at the same time, it is patient.

Obedient to Joshua's word, "Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice; neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout;" Israel marched around Jericho, and by their action expressed the obedience of their hearts. God's mind ought to be readable in the lives of His people now. A Christian life is more convincing than sermons or books. And in this testimony, both the babe and the father in Christ bear part. Let none say he is too feeble, but let him learn of the army of Israel, where not only the "men of war," but also "the gathering host"—the rearward—were bidden compass the city.

The sure result of faith in God is victory. As the trumpets continually sounded, it was as if Israel were proclaimed conquerors, or rather as if they proclaimed the hastening triumph. True, the day of jubilee did not occur until many years after Jericho's fall, but the trum-

pets used upon the occasion had their significance, sounding forth triumphant faith in the face of defiant Jericho. The soldier of Christ has a song of victory even now—anticipative of his jubilee—and the Lord on high loves to hear it sung. We should not be behind the noble men of faith of by-gone times, for we know that everything which opposes itself—all that walls out Christ from the world, the power of this world's god and king, everything, shall be subdued to our Lord. If we were to place our song and our praise, as it were, in the front, as did Israel; if we said to our hearts, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established," we should rejoice over more enemies than we now do. Simple confidence in the Lord begins and ends conflict with thanksgiving; and if we realize that Christ is with us, as Israel carried the ark in their front, there must be praise. Would that the Lord's host now presented as glorious a unity of faith, patience, diligence, obedience, and triumph as did the people of Israel when compassing Jericho! Would that each believer in the prospect of the coming day, might obey his Captain's command, and go up, let the path be rough or smooth, "Every man straight before him!"

This word, "Every man straight before him," is peculiarly suited to our own day, when men herd on in one another's steps, when the nobleness of individuality is so sorely lacking, and when few dare to brave the sneer of being peculiar in obeying God's word.

May we also never forget that this world is the City of Destruction, and, remembering this, give all heed to the solemn warning which is contained in Joshua's curse upon him who would rebuild Jericho!

IX.

DEFEAT.

JOSHUA, Ch. vii., viii. to v. 29.

"Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not.—Hosea vii. 9.

DEEP and heart-searching are the lessons taught by Israel's discomfiture before Ai, where hearts, strong through faith, became weak like water, and where the shout of victory was turned to weeping.

In the first verse of ch. vii. the finger of God points to the secret source whence the sorrow sprang. Evil begins within and works outwards, "A deceived heart hath turned him aside." The believer in declension is like the noble oak which, in a state of decay, retains the outward appearance of life and vigour long after its strength has departed.

It is only in the light that we can have fellowship with God, and had Israel been walking in the light they would have sought counsel of Him before the battle, and would thus have been spared their sorrow.

Israel judged by sight, "They went up and viewed the country," and, flushed with victory, they depended upon their own resources instead of Jehovah. "Make not all the people to labour thither, for they are few." There-

fore when defeat came, the despair which seized them expressed the real condition of their hearts. Circumstances always bring out what is in a man, developing his real state. When defeat overtakes the believer who is self-confident, despair speedily lays hold of him.

Joshua almost blamed God for Israel's overthrow. In his bitterness, he exclaimed, "Alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast thou at all brought this people over Jordan, to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us?" Despair springs from departure from God. Joshua reckoned all Israel as clean blotted out, and he reached the extreme, when he said, "And what wilt thou do unto thy great name?" But in truth this was the very question which the defeat and slaughter he mourned had answered; and God bade him know that Israel had sinned, and that His name must be cleansed from association with evil at any cost. Israel had taken of the accursed thing; they had stolen and dissembled also.

When God's people wilfully touch evil—steal that which He has appointed to the fire, dissembling and dishonesty characterize them. And as "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," He has a question with such, both because of the "accursed thing," and because they do not "walk honestly as children of the day." Shall the people of God, whose sins are put away by the blood of Jesus, God's own dear Son, hide evil in their midst, when Israel, who approached God by the blood of bulls and goats, which could never take away sin, were

separated from Him because the accursed thing was among their stuff?

"Sanctify yourselves."

"There is an accursed thing in the midst of thee, O Israel: thou canst not stand before thine enemies, until ye take away the accursed thing from among you."

Joshua was not slow to obey, "he rose up early in the morning," and, in obedience to God's word, searched out the evil. When the evil was detected the people's care for the glory of Jehovah's great name was roused. They ran, took out the hidden things, shewed them to all Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. None of the shame of the sin was covered over, for the question with the people was this,—Achan or Jehovah. There had been no quarter for Jericho, how then should there be quarter for the Israelite who brought the accursed thing out of Jericho into the Lord's camp? And as all Israel were involved in the dishonour done to the name of the Lord, so all Israel joined in the clearance, "All Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire."

A great heap of stones was raised over the transgressor, for it was not Israel's intention to wipe out the memory of the sad lesson they had learned. "So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor (Trouble) unto this day."

This Valley of Achor became a door of hope for Israel, and, blessed be the God of all grace, valleys of trouble are still doors of hope for the contrite, for, "if

we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Godly sorrow is ever healthful to the soul. Weeping over evil, and putting it away, lead to renewed blessing and further victories.

The accursed thing itself has its instruction. The garment came from Shinar, the plain upon which Babel was built. The men of that day leaving the light—journeyed from the east, and leaving their high places—the mountains whereon the ark rested—found a plain, and there joined heart and hand to make themselves a name in independence of God. This was Babel, or Confusion. Alas! garments of apostasy are now not only hidden in believers' tents but worn in full daylight. And as for the silver and gold, money is a sad snare to God's people, piercing them through with many sorrows.

Israel was now restored to God's full favour. He recalled them to first promises, and in unchanging faithfulness bade them again "Fear not, neither be dismayed." It is thus the Lord leads our restored souls back to the fountain of His grace, and refreshes our hearts with His unchanging love. But because Israel had been lax, and said, "Let not all the people labour thither," the Lord now bids them exert themselves to the utmost, "Take all the people of war;" and as they had confided in their own strength, they have now to undergo the humiliation of feigned flight in order to attain victory.

It is well to walk softly after having fallen, for although God forgives us the iniquity of our sin upon our confession of it, yet He deepens in us the sense of our evil ways.

There is encouragement to be gathered from the way in which the king of Ai came out against restored Israel. He perceived no difference in them, but rushed proudly on to his doom. God's ways with His people baffle the calculations of their foes, who merely match man against man, and leave God out in their reckoning.

The key to the ultimate victory is found in Joshua's obedient persistency to the Lord's commands: "For Joshua drew not his hand back, wherewith he stretched out the spear, until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai." We need purpose of heart and dependence upon the Lord. A thorough-hearted man of faith is never satisfied until the name of the Lord is triumphant. He is a poor soldier of Christ who, having once at his Captain's bidding stretched out his hand, draws it back before his object is fully attained.

X.

THE WORD OF GOD.

JOSHUA, Ch. viii. 30—35.

"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with a whole heart."—Ps. cxix. 2.

THE discipline Israel had suffered yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness; they were earnest to obey God's Word. This is seen in Joshua's command to bury the body of Ai's king before sundown, lest by its remaining upon the tree the land should become defiled. (Deut. xxi. 23.) But besides this, they now repaired to Ebal and Gerizim, and set up the stones whereon the law was written.

The Lord had, by Moses, instructed Israel to set up the stones upon their entrance into Canaan; He had pointed out the mountains where they should put the blessing and the curse consequent upon their obedience and disobedience to His Word, and had given them to know that by setting up the words of His law they placed themselves under its authority, and became His willing people. (See Deut. xi. 29, 30, and xxvii. 9, 10.)

Joshua's faith is expressed in dedicating the first altar erected by Israel in Canaan to "the Lord God of Israel." This altar was built of unhewn stones, not

"polluted" by iron tool, stones which no human hand had shapen. It was for burnt-offering and for peace-offering, and no mention is made of sin-offerings sacrificed upon it. The sacrifice offered upon it would therefore imply, that Israel hearkened to God's Word as worshippers, and as in communion with Him. The altar was built upon Mount Ebal, from which the Amens responding to the curses for breaking the law were uttered.

They also set up great stones upon the mount, plaistered them with plaister, and wrote thereon the words of the law. (Deut. xxvii. 1, 2.) Having done this the Levites surrounded the ark in the valley between the mountains and read the words of the law, the whole host of Israel filling the hill sides. (Josh. viii. 33.) The elders of Israel, the officers and their judges; "The stranger, as well as he that was born among them;" the infant and the warrior, men, women, and children; none were absent. All this vast company were gathered together, that, by solemn Amens uttered before God, they might bow to His Word, and take upon them its responsibility.

What a lesson does this assembled multitude teach us in thus manifesting their obedient honouring of God's Word. Alas! the Word of God is too little revered, too little obeyed by His people now. Human ideas are allowed to stand beside it; it is not always the final appeal as well as the strength and food of God's people. Their Amen does not always arise heavenwards when its precepts are uttered.

The curses were read with a loud voice by the Levites, and, as each curse for disobedience sounded in Israel's ears, the hundreds of thousands assembled upon Mount Ebal responded with unanimous Amens. Twelve times they said "Amen" to the twelve times uttered curses, and the twelfth, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them," included every possible neglect or failure. Blessings also were read (Josh. viii. 33, 34), but where were the Amens sounding from Mount Gerizim? Scripture is silent. It records not one responsive "So be it" to blessings earned by the obedience of fallen man. (Read Deut. xxvii.) Man may justly assent to "all the judgments" (Ex. xxiv. 3) of God's law, but they who remain under the law remain under its curse. (Gal. iii. 10.)

The standing of the Christian presents a striking contrast to that of Israel in this scene. Christ has, by His death, made His people free, for they have died to the law in Him. His cross has severed them from the law's power and dominion, for the law addresses not its demands to men who are dead: "My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Rom. vii. 4.)

The covenant inscribed upon the plaister covered stones, St. Paul said, eighteen hundred years ago, "decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away" (Heb. viii. 13), but the covenant of grace is changeless and eternal.

"If that first covenant had been faultless, then should

no place have been sought for the second." (Heb. viii. 7.) But that of grace is perfect before God. The Lord Jesus is the mediator thereof. His own precious blood has confirmed it.

Our blessings are not entrusted to our own custody, but are in the safe and eternal keeping of God our Father Himself, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings "in Christ."

Our altar of thanksgiving and worship is, therefore, not set, as was Israel's, upon an Ebal—a mount of curses—for "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us."

But the contrast reaches to our responsibility as well as to our blessings. God requires holiness of His people in accordance with the revelation which He gives them thus, Israel's standard of holiness was the law, the Christian's standard is Christ. Inasmuch as our blessings are greater than were Israel's, so is our responsibility.

The Christian is beloved in sovereign grace and is bidden obey the truth because he is so beloved, not lest being disobedient he should forfeit the goodness shown him. (Compare Rom. xii. 1, 2, with Deut. xi. 26—28.) Those who say they are Christians are professedly under the authority of the Lord Jesus, and their responsibility is to walk as He walked. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought also so to walk, even as He walked." (1 Jno. ii. 6.) Such are subject to the precepts of the word, and if the Christian obeys not the word of God he belies his Chris-

tianity. "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 Jno. ii. 4.) It is the "reasonable service" of those who are brought into the fulness of God's blessing to present their "bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." Because their sins are forgiven for His name's sake, it is for them to seek and to do those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. "For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not grievous." (1 Jno. v. 3.)

XI.

ALLIANCE.

JOSHUA Ch. ix.

"When all the kings which were on this side Jordan, in the hills, and in the valleys, and in all the coasts of the great sea * * * heard thereof, they gathered themselves together to fight with Joshua and with Israel, with one accord."—Ch. ix. 1. 2.

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."—2 Cor. vi. 14.

PROBABLY the tidings of Israel taking formal possession of the land at Ebal and Gerizim stirred up the antagonism of their enemies afresh. We well know how the enmity of the world is roused when God's people assert the authority of His Word, and their title to all that it promises.

When our spiritual foes oppose us, we are thrown upon the Lord for strength, and this is well; but if they approach us guised as angels of light, and greet us with Scripture, we stand in peril of being deceived. Israel proved this in their dealings with the inhabitants of Gibeon, who having heard of the overthrow of Jericho and Ai "did work wilily." They belonged to the enemies who were fighting against Israel, but they chose guile as their weapon instead of open antagonism.

The Gibeonitish ambassadors introduced themselves with religious flattery, complimenting Israel upon the

ame of their God. This temptation is hard to withstand, for it is natural to man to relish this kind of honour. The princes should have immediately cast themselves upon the Lord, and have sought His guidance; but they began parleying with evil, which ever opens the door to sorrow, for when Satan has so far succeeded with God's people as to be allowed a hearing, he has gained the vantage ground. Eve unfallen proved such to be the case, and so do all her fallen children. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James iv. 7.) The ambassadors, by talking of the victories on the other side Jordan, evaded the application of God's word to themselves, yet without altogether denying His authority. They used the truth entirely for their own ends; they only told a portion of the truth, and put that forward to cover the lie of their having come from a far country. This is Satan's way of handling God's word, and his servants are not slow to assume the semblance of devotion, and to talk in religious strains; but none of them submit to the authority of the divine word, or bring forward all the truth.

The testimonials of these Gibeonites were mouldy bread, wine bottles rent and empty, old sacks, tattered garments, and old shoes clouted upon their feet. These were their means of deception; and characteristic signs these worn-out things are of false ambassadors.

An alliance was the object of the Gibeonites, "Make ye a league with us." The temptation was great; Israel were in the enemy's land, an alliance looked like

strength, and it was a relief to meet with friends when foes surrounded: but alliance, in Israel's position, would be trusting in human help, and therefore was more dangerous than the opposition of all the united forces of the powers of the land. They were victorious over the hosts of the enemy so long as they resolutely contended with them, but the introduction of the foe into their camp was the commencement of that leavening process which in time corrupted the whole people.

Satan as often endeavours to form alliances between God's people and the world, as he does to overturn them by open opposition, indeed, in our day evil association is his chief snare. By this means he has gained advantage over many. He has lured them from their integrity and watchful dependence upon the Lord to this quicksand, where they have presently sunk, dragged down into the treacherous mire. Let the Christian, desirous after the glory of the holy name of his Master, look around and enquire, Where is the church? Where is the world? Is it not now an alliance? (Read James iv. 4.)

When the Gibeonites addressed themselves to the people of Israel, they occupied a holy place. Their camp had been purged by discipline because God was there, and their responsibility was to maintain the character of the camp. The light of God's holy word had just shone brightly in their midst in the presence of the sacrifice, and it defined expressly their conduct towards the people of Canaan. God's moral requirements de-

manded that His people should utterly destroy all idolators from His land; being holy, He required holiness in His people. God dwelt among them, could they, then, with impunity ally themselves with darkness? Could such as believed in God have fellowship with infidels? Alliance with the men of Canaan was practically a denial of God's holy name, and was not keeping His word. It was treachery to the holy trust which Jehovah had committed to them, and they eventually proved that by allying themselves with the Canaanites, they forfeited Jehovah's protection. The princes indeed made peace, but it was peace with evil, and not God's peace.

If the princes were deceived into the alliance, it was because they were not subject to God, and this made the case only the worse. "They took of their victuals, and asked not counsel of the mouth of the Lord." If we commit errors in judgment, it is much more likely to be because our own wisdom misleads us than because we feel we have none. Had they who guided the affairs of God's people subjected themselves to the Lord, He would have opened their eyes and ears, so that the lies of the mouldy bread and of the religious flattery would have been apparent.

As the self-reliance of the people cost them defeat at Ai, so the self-confidence of the princes brought about the alliance with Gibeon. Israel failed "utterly to destroy" the nations, who consequently taught them "to do after all their abominations." All the wisdom of

Solomon availed him not against the evil in his own house; his heart was turned from the Lord, and he became an idolator. Knowledge will not be their safeguard who tamper with God's moral requirements. In a day like our own, when we are beset with the spirit of compromise and of so-called liberality, what is more incumbent upon the Christian than obeying the exhortation, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. v. 22), than keeping rigidly to the precepts of God's word, and shutting the door of his heart to all invitations of alliance with evil? It might have appeared very unfriendly for the princes of Israel to question the ambassadors who came so peaceably; but "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." (Jam. iii. 17.)

After a three days' journey the eyes of Israel were opened, and the result of the alliance was seen to be loss. But it was too late to recover their lost ground—too late to extricate themselves from the position into which their compromising spirit had brought them. The cities which would have fallen to Israel they could not conquer—the Gibeonites they could not thrust out. "And all the congregation murmured against the princes." How many blessings have believers forfeited by their alliance with evil! How often have they had to mourn the continual presence of that which they have proved to be weakness instead of strength—to be an occasion leading them to stray from the Lord, instead of a help in His way. Also, centuries later, Israel reaped bitter fruits from this alliance: for Saul, in "his

zeal for the children of Israel," sought to exterminate the Gibeonites—sought with his own hand to remove the punishment which the carelessness and self-sufficiency of the princes had brought upon Israel, and God was displeased, and sent year after year a famine on the land. "God is not mocked; what a man soweth, that also shall he reap."

XII.

THE INHERITANCE CONQUERED.

JOSHUA Ch. x., xi., xii.

"I will not trust in my bow neither shall my sword save me."—Ps. xliv. 6.

ISRAEL'S alliance with Gibeon brought them severe warfare; but God's grace overcame, and the most remarkable victory recorded in the book was the result.

While at the camp at Gilgal, Israel heard of the purpose of the five kings of the Amorites, "So Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valour." Then, the Lord said, "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Resting on this promise, Joshua "therefore came unto them suddenly," and, responding to his faith, "the Lord discomfited them before Israel." Here we may trace the order of God's gracious working for His people. He leads them into the path of obedience, He gives them encouraging promises—assurances of victory upon their way, He enables them to believe His faithful word in the face of every danger, and then, crowns all with complete success. Well may we say, "Thou hast wrought all our works in us."

Upon the memorable day of Israel's victory, in answer

to faith, Jehovah turned the powers of nature to the help of His people. He proved, for their encouragement and for their foes' discomfiture His authority, "in heaven above, and in earth beneath," and the sun and moon, which they worshipped as Baal and Ashtaroth (Judges ii. 13), bowed before the Most High. "For the Lord fought for Israel."

An instructive lesson is to be gathered from the second victory at Hebron. (See verses 23 and 36.) The King of Hebron was one of the five kings who had been destroyed, and whose people had been scattered; yet we find it recorded a second time that the King of Hebron was put to death. In Israel's rapid conquest they had not had time to search out all the hiding places of the fugitives, who therefore returned, re-peopled and re-fortified Hebron, and set up a fresh king there. (Ver. 20.) Hence Hebron had to be re-conquered.

It is not enough in the Christian's warfare to dispossess and to scatter enemies; the stronghold must be garrisoned. Spiritual foes may be defeated, yet they are by no means annihilated. The baffled enemy retires only to issue again from his lurking-place with revived energy. There can, therefore, be no rest, no sitting still; spiritual energy must be incessant; if not, the old battles will have to be re-fought.

In this campaign not one inhabitant was left remaining; all that breathed were utterly destroyed as the Lord God of Israel commanded; victory followed victory in rapid succession; "All these kings and their land did

Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel." Implicit obedience to the Lord earned its reward; and what strength would accrue to the Christian soldier, and what victories would be awarded him, if he went on in the spirit of Israel in this campaign, making no terms with God's enemies but in the power of his separation to God obeying His word.

At this time the rulers of the land, the five kings, bowed before Israel. Then Joshua bade the captains "which went with him to come near," and told them "put your feet upon the necks of these kings;" and the Lord has promised shortly to bruise Satan under the feet of those who are His soldiers. "Fear not, nor be dismayed; be strong and of good courage; for thus shall the Lord do to all your enemies against whom ye fight."

After the battle with the five kings, Israel returned to their camp "in peace." (Ver. 21.) Jehovah had watched over each combatant for good; He had shielded and strengthened them, and brought each back safe and unharmed.

The conquest of the south country attained, Israel, as their custom was, returned to their camp at Gilgal.

It is only when in the place of true spiritual self-judgment that we can find the renewed vigour needful for the fresh conflicts awaiting us. We go to our Gilgal, in a sense, naturally after defeat; but the necessity for turning thither after victory is as great; otherwise we become boasters or trusters in victories instead of in the Lord, for prosperity usually begets self-confidence, and

induces negligence. Well would it be if we had the wisdom always to remember that the flesh is dead, and grace to mortify our members, and thus be prepared to fight the fight of faith.

The victories gained by the people of Israel were soon followed by further conflicts, for the kings of the north united to attack them. Jehovah gave fresh strength for the subjugation of these new foes. "Be not afraid of them."—So they came upon them "suddenly," for delay in the path of obedience causes weakness. The Lord bade Joshua destroy the chariots and horses wherein Israel's enemies trusted, and Joshua obeyed exactly. And if the Lord would not have His people lean upon any other arm than His, neither would He allow that they should make a centre for themselves of the seat of their enemies' government; consequently Hazor, the head city of the district, was burnt. Yet in Christendom these lessons are forgotten, and hard it is for individual Christians to accept their instructions. Few there are who practically own that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, and that through God they are mighty to pull down strongholds; and fewer still who refuse the influence and strength which the powers of the world offer to Christianity, and who own no other head than the risen Lord.

There cannot be peace between good and evil, or affinity between light and darkness. As the record of Israel's warfare closes, on the one hand it is said, "There was not a city which made peace with the children of

Israel save Gibeon," and on the other, "Joshua made war a long time with all those kings."

"As the man so is his strength!" "At that time came Joshua," and the giants of the mountains—the tall men, who struck terror into Israel and Eschol were cut off. They were the first terror to Israel, and were the last to fall. When Israel first saw them, they measured man by man, and were, in their own sight and in the sight of the giants, like grasshoppers, but now they had learnt, by the experience of many victories, dependence upon Jehovah—to compare the strength of the giant with that of the Almighty. What a growth in God's strength does the cutting off of those Anakims express, yet how many, many years had passed, what disciplining, what blessing had been learned before this result was attained! And now, the giants being cut off, we read of rest.

"So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war."

The character of the rest is however different from that of Ch. xxi. Here it is rest consequent upon the subjugation of the land, "according to all that the Lord said unto Moses;" there the rest is that which the Lord sware to give them as He had promised to their fathers. The rest here is such as Israel being freed from the power of their foes might enjoy, but it does not imply a cessation from warfare.

Thus, although the victories over the rulers and governments that had been vanquished are enumerated (ch. xii.), yet there were remnants of these vanquished nations among them which had to be rooted out. These foes God had purposely left among them; they were tests of the children of Israel's faithfulness, who were told when they had overcome their foes, utterly to detest, and utterly to abhor the accursed things of the nations. (Deut. vii. 22—26.)

So it is with the Christian. The Lord Jesus has broken the powers of evil. He has conquered Satan, and it is for His people, to utterly abhor and to contend with the enemies He has conquered, while resting in the completeness of His victory.

"They got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but Thy right hand and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them." (Ps. xliv. 3.)

XIII.

POSSESSIONS.

JOSHUA Ch. xiii., xiv. to v. 5.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ."—1 Eph. 1, 3.

THE second section of the Book of Joshua (ch. xiii.), commences by Jehovah saying, "There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed." Northward and southward, toward the sunrising and toward the country of the Sidonians, the Lord saw possessions which He had given to Israel, still untrodden. The Lord was not satisfied that His people should lose the enjoyment of their blessings, therefore He promised them His support afresh, and declared, even in their laxity, "I will drive out" the enemy. This "I will" was emphatic, and should have roused Israel. Beyond this promise the Lord bade Joshua "Divide thou it (all the unpossessed land) by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance, as I have commanded thee." Thus the whole of the land was reassured to them. But Israel's energy was on the wane. They were settling down in the portion of Canaan which their zeal and endurance had made their own.

The failure of the two and a-half tribes to drive out the remnant of the giants from their inheritance on the other side of Jordan is noted at this time. Thus all

Israel is seen overtaken with sloth, which proved more difficult to overcome than the enemies they had subdued. Sloth should be the Christian's constant dread. "Awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Eph. v. 14.)

If Israel had seen the lengths and breadths of their possessions as God saw them, could they have been slack to possess? But their eyes were set upon the possessions they had gained, and they were blind to what God had in store for them.

With what earnestness did St. Paul long that believers might have their hearts knit together "unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery * * * wherein (margin) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 2, 3.) Yet, untold as is the glory of the inheritance, what is harder than rousing the soul to enter upon the blessings "yet to be possessed?" The idea of settling down to enjoy what we may have attained is delusive; for there is no such thing as remaining stationary in divine things. Israel found out their error by the loss of what they had gained.

"I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such a spirit should be our pattern: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect (of mature age—full growth), be thus minded." (Phil. iii. 13—15.)

XIV.

TRUEHEARTEDNESS.

JOSHUA Ch. xiv. 6—15.

"With purpose of heart * * * cleave unto the Lord."—Acts xi. 23.

THE Lord is assuredly better pleased to record the energy of His people than their laxity, their triumphs than their defeats. The trueheartedness of Caleb forms a bright contrast to the spirit pervading the camp generally, and it is not without Divine purpose that his story is introduced before the lands and possessions of Israel are detailed, whether enjoyed or merely apportioned.

Caleb's history is a sample of noble purpose, a handful of the finest of the wheat; his spirit was after God's own heart.

Caleb had been proved in the day of declension. He had stood firm with Joshua when all Israel practically forsook the Lord. When the spies that accompanied him to search out the promised land brought back their evil report, lamented over the presence of the giants, and made all Israel to languish, Caleb, only thinking of the goodness of the inheritance, and of God's delight in His people He had brought up out of the land of bondage, out of the abundance of his heart said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome

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it." His heart being filled with God's goodness and faithfulness was garrisoned against unbelief and murmurings. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and Caleb with Joshua "wholly followed the Lord his God," and in the face of their faintness and unbelief —greater foes than all the sons of Anak—earnestly declared to Israel, "The Lord is with us." Caleb, therefore, occupied a separate place among his brethren, who went up with him to spy the land. (Read Numb. xiii., xiv. to Ver. 10.)

As is frequently the way of God's dealings with His people, after the promise was given, trial was sent. The sorrows of the wilderness intervened; its discipline; its chastening. Caleb had to wander with rebellious Israel, to bear humblings in common with them; he saw the men of war drop down, one by one, and die—he saw the Lord dishonoured by His people—he grieved over their neglect of circumcision and of the Passover feast—he mourned over the idols they carried with them; but the promise stayed him—his eye was upon it—it shone beyond the dreary waste—it lighted up his path—it framed his life; his soul was lifted out of the wilderness, having found her treasure in the promised land.

He had trodden that country once, and by faith made it his own. He knew that it was an exceeding good land, and that the God of grace, who had given such a land to His people, would bring them, in whom He delighted, thither. He had not lost the savour of the first ripe grapes, nor forgotten the Valley of Eschol.

The fire of his love which was kindled upon that first day burned within him still.

His wholeheartedness was in no way marred by waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, by afflictions, by prospects seemingly blighted.

Neither was his strength impaired, for at fourscore and five years old this noble soldier was as strong for war, both to go out and to come in, as he was forty-five years before. Looking back upon his rugged path in the wilderness, he said, "And now, behold the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses."

He trusted God both for himself and his children, and not one word of the Lord fell to the ground! Fellow believer, would that our hearts were true and strong like Caleb's! Let not the murmurings, nor the agitation of our companions, draw away our souls from the grace of God. We must undergo discipline, not only for our own sakes—to test our own hearts—but also in companionship with God's family at large. If we walk for any length of time in the wilderness we shall see "men of war" fall by our side. Some will step out of the ranks, some will go back into the world, some will make common cause with the adversary; but may none of these deep afflictions draw our hearts from our God. The Lord is our strength, His comforts never fail; if we abide in His presence He will be with us all the way.

Caleb looking back to the past in the power of the present, was a sure sign that his heart did not condemn him,

and that he abode in God's strength. It was not doubtingly he said, "If so be the Lord will be with me, then shall I be able to drive them out, as the Lord hath said;" but in the realization of the needs be for the Lord's strength and presence to enable him to obey His word. The gracious promise, "the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest," was the energy of His strength. The delight of the Lord in His people with which he had sought to encourage Israel at Eschol, was his courage before the giants, and their great and fenced cities.

Sometimes the Christian soldier, after being long in God's service, almost forgets that God alone is his strength, and "if so be the Lord will be with me," is exchanged for a vainglorious self-confidence, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself." (Judges xvi. 20.)

The Lord honoured Caleb's dependence upon him; he took Hebron, and "drave thence the three sons of Anak." (Ch. xv. 14.)

In Caleb we have a sample of the finest qualities of Christian soldiership, a whole heart, unabated strength, continual dependence.

"And Joshua blessed him." Doubtless his soul was moved at Caleb's words.

With a note of praise this history closes. "And the land had rest from war." Faithfulness earns rest. "Well done good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Caleb had his portion in the great inheritance of Judah. (Praise!)

XV.

INHERITING.

JOSHUA XV., XVI., XVII.

"Every place which the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you."

"And having done all—to stand."—Ep. vi. 13.

THE Lord now returns to the inheritance of the land of promise. The portions of the tribes of Judah and Joseph are set out first. The portion of Judah proved "too much for them," that is, their boundaries were larger than they could fill, and eventually the tribe of Simeon dwelt within the lot assigned to them.

As the portions of these tribes are set out, the slackness or weakness of the inheritors is commented upon. "As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out: but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah in Jerusalem unto this day." The fortress of Zion, where these men were lodged, was not subdued until David's day (2 Saml. v. 6—10), and even then its defenders taunted David to cast them out.

"The Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites unto this day, and serve under tribute." If the Ephraimites were able to put them under tribute, they might have destroyed them altogether, but "they drave not out the

Canaanites." They, instead, made a gain out of them, using them for their own advantage. Alas, is it not too often so with Christians with what they should regard as their spiritual foes?

"The children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of these cities; but the Canaanite would dwell in the land." This "could not" is a terrible word: it is the dead force of unbelief, that distrust in the living God, which has been the spiritual ruin of thousands. This "could not" was simply sluggishness. The enemy at least was in earnest; his foot held the native soil, and there, save at the cost of his life, he "would dwell." If God's people settle down contented with any advantages they may have gained, they will find that Satan and the world, far from being conquered, are determined to maintain their ground. Let the inert and distrustful Christian consider the certain end of his "could not."

"When the children of Israel were waxen strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute; but they did not utterly drive them out." This was directly opposed to the Word of God—"Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them * * * that they teach you not to do after all their abominations * * * so should ye sin against the Lord your God." (Deut. xx. 16—18.)

Let us not be deceived; spiritual foes placed under tribute will soon assert their right to rule. Israel learned all the abominations of the Canaanites, and had

to serve the Canaanite in punishment for their sins. And those principles so contrary to Christ, "the rudiments of the world"—"the commandments and traditions of men"—the "worshipping of angels," meats, and drinks, and holy days, with "philosophy and vain deceit," against which the Holy Ghost, through St. Paul, warned the Christians of Colosse, having been introduced into Christendom, and not having been "utterly" refused by Christians, now rule many, who, beguiled of their reward, and subject to ordinances, are in thraldom.

Although the children of Ephraim so signally failed in making thoroughly their own what God had given them yet they murmured because their allotted portion was not large enough. Their numbers, "I am a great people," and their past history, "the Lord hath blessed me hitherto," entitled them to a larger place than befell them! How like the heart of man, ever ready to find fault—except with self! Murmuring over his circumstances, while failing to discern the extent of his privileges! Many a Christian murmurs thus, looking at his own importance and the dignity of his past history. He who is not satisfied with what God has appointed for him, misses the very opportunities in which he is most calculated to serve God. But the truth was, the portion of Joseph was fully equal to that of the other tribes when their relative numbers were compared, and their district also was peculiarly fruitful.

Joshua keenly rebuked their self-sufficiency. "If thou be a great people, then get thee up to the wood

country and cut down for thyself in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, if Mount Ephraim be too narrow for thee." He threw them, in the wisdom of God, upon themselves, to shame them into action. Had their greatness been so vast, they need not have spoken about it. When the Christian speaks of being great, he exhibits his littleness. If he announces his virtues—as is frequently done—he only declares his pride. The greatness of the tribe of Joseph would be seen by their deeds, by felling the wood country and cutting down the giants, but they showed themselves men of words rather than of deed and truth, and trusting in their past greatness instead of in God, they broke down under the test to which Joshua put them. "And the children of Joseph said, The hill is not enough for us: and all the Canaanites that dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron."

Joshua again took them up on their first words, "Thou art a great people and hast great power;" and told them if they made their lot thoroughly their own it would prove ample for them,—"Thou shalt not have one lot only." Finally, he set them to cut down the wood country, to possess the mountains, and to cast out the strong Canaanites with the iron chariots. Great and strong people as they were, they were surely fitted for hardness and courage.

"Cut down for thyself:" we need such a word. There is too much looking to man and too little to the Lord.

If victories have been granted the Christian aforetime; if by him the Lord has vanquished the powers of evil, saving souls, and bringing them out of the kingdom of darkness, or delivering His people from Satan's snares, still, the past is not power. If the believer is looking to the past—"The Lord hath blessed me hitherto," he is looking to the blessing and not to the Lord. He must even to-day, in God's strength, learn afresh the word, "Cut down for thyself." That the Lord is mighty to save, is the chief lesson we should gather from past victories. The experience of the past goodness of the Lord should simply stay our souls upon Him for present power, and send us forth in the energy of His strength.

Men—Christian men—may give a place to the believer, but the Captain of the host would teach us that the power which He gives is the only real title to Christian honour. The apostle Paul would not go upon "another man's line of things made ready to his hand;" he would not boast of "other men's labours" (See 2 Cor. 12—18); he was too single-eyed to do so, and a noble Christian would ever seek to act in the spirit of these words, "Cut down for thyself."

The Lord has given to all His people some especial service of love and work of faith; never let any say, "My bounds are too narrow for me," but seek to make all his "lot" practically his own. The Lord has appointed us to overcome in the power of His grace;

and if we are simple-hearted, we shall find that victories are to be gained in our present circumstances, and that the providential ordering of our lot is rich and fruitful. "Cut down for thyself."

XVI.

WORSHIP.

JOSHUA xviii., v. 1.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."—Jno. iv. 24.

AFTER these tribes had received their portion all Israel assembled at Shiloh. "And the land was subdued before them." Shiloh signifies rest or peace, there the people "set up the tabernacle of the congregation." Shiloh is henceforth Israel's centre. The tabernacle was God's, and Israel being God's people, it was "the tabernacle of the congregation."

Until the believer has divinely given peace he cannot worship in spirit and in truth. If the consciousness of the load of sin bows down a soul, there is no ability to sing the song of praise "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." And although the believer may be assured of his acceptance in the Beloved, and know the forgiveness of sins, yet if his conscience accuse for unconfessed transgression, until restored to communion with God, he cannot worship Him. It is when at rest in the finished work of Christ upon the cross, and at rest in His holy presence, that the believer in spirit and truth worships the Father.

Jehovah had given Israel victory and possessions, "the land was subdued before them." If they had not conquered their foes, and received their inheritance, they would have required Jehovah's promise of victory instead of being at liberty to assemble around his tabernacle. If we are praying God to bless us, we are not at that time worshipping Him, for prayer is seeking benefits from God; neither is hearing of His grace worshipping Him, for this is learning of His goodness; yet both prayer and preaching may and should lead the soul into adoration. The heart of the worshipper is a vessel filled by God and overflowing with thanksgiving; a heart, which lacking nothing delights in Him who made it rich. Worship is blessing the Giver of the gifts Himself, and not alone for the gifts He bestows.

At Shiloh were the one altar and the one tabernacle; this was Israel's centre, and around this divinely appointed centre the circle of the twelve tribes was drawn. The breadth of the circle would be according to the multitude of the children of Israel, the centre could never vary. Thither would each faithful heart of the vast congregation turn, as every compass points to the one common attraction. Christ is God's centre for His people, and around Him is the circle of His redeemed. "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. xlix. 10.) Christ alone is the object of each heart's adoration. God has given no other attraction for His people. Christ will be the centre in the glory, and even now upon

the earth, despite all the divisions of language and of race, yes, and of creeds and isms, Jesus only is the centre for His people.

Israel's tabernacle was the common inheritance of the nation, the chief of the fathers and the humblest of the people worshipped there as one people, for Jehovah's one people they were, and He dwelt among them. It was as *a body*, therefore, and not simply *as individuals*, that Israel worshipped at Shiloh, all the Lord's congregation looking to the Lord's tabernacle.

There could be no divinely owned association of the tribe save where the glory of God was—at Shiloh. True association of God's people ever has God's presence in it, it is fellowship of heart and purpose in the light of God. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." (1 John i. 7.) Christ is the only centre of true fellowship, and there cannot be true fellowship among those who are united to Him and to each other, unless this be practically recognized. Christians are now God's circle upon the earth of which Christ is the centre. God has made them, though many, one body by His Spirit who dwells in them, and this oneness no power can disturb; but notwithstanding the perfection of the unity of the Body, unless Christ be foremost in His people's hearts, the oneness will not be manifest.

In the days of Israel's freshness and simplicity, as we read in the Twenty-first chapter of the Book of Joshua, they regarded with feelings of abhorrence the erection

of another altar, considering it nothing short of rebellion against the one God and His one congregation. As time elapsed the people at large departed from the Lord, and the union of their tribes was broken; then self-will and independence erected other altars (1 Kings xii. 27—33), and at length Israel became the "children of the captivity;" still, the faithful heart, true to the one God and one congregation, turned from the stranger's land towards the place where the glory of Jehovah stood, and linked itself in spirit with the *twelve* tribes of Israel. (1 Kings xviii. 31. Daniel vi. 10.)

How welcome is the scene here described; God's people prospered with victory over all their foes, surrounded with an inheritance greater than all their needs, assembled in one body, and in the excellence of God's peace worshipping Him as one spirit.

It foretells a brighter day. The gathering together of the scattered tribes of Israel to the Christ they now reject. And it has its encouragement for the Christian believer. We find, in the Seventeenth of St. John's Gospel, the union of God's people which nothing can sever (ver. 11), and their union displayed upon the earth a testimony to the world (ver. 21), and their union which shall be displayed in the glory (ver. 23.), in that coming day of peace and rest, the one undivided company of God's people shall behold the glory of the Lord Jesus, which the Father has given Him. Then all hearts shall be united eternally, then all shall be fixed undistractedly upon Christ, then "shall all see eye to eye." Until that

day dawn, though the testimony of the oneness of Christ's people is not *manifested* upon the earth, may it be the anxious care of each believer to *endeavour* "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

XVII.

THE INHERITANCE APPORTIONED.

JOSHUA Ch. xviii, xix.

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—Hosea vi. 3.

"THE land was subdued before them," all, therefore, that Israel had to do, was to dwell in it, but like the slothful man who roasteth not that which he took in hunting (Prov. xii. 27), they lacked the vigour to make thoroughly theirs what they had conquered. In this condition, "Joshua said unto the children of Israel, how long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?" Warnings as to the consequences of their slackness were subsequently sent, but never again such an exhortation.

Although they were in the enjoyment of peace, yet they were ignorant of large districts of God's promised land which waited distribution among them, for when Joshua bade the men "go walk through the land and describe it," only two and a-half tribes had their inheritance within the land of Canaan, and seven tribes remained without any possession. "The men went and passed through the land, and described it by cities in seven parts in a book, and came again to Joshua and to the host at Shiloh."

Israel now knew exactly what belonged to them, for the unpossessed land was minutely set out, and the districts so described were divided among the tribes at Shiloh, but it is one thing to know our portion, another to dwell in it, and even in Israel's palmiest days—the time of Solomon—the land was not entirely occupied.

If we are "slack to go to possess" our spiritual inheritance, either we are ignorant of what it is, or we are satisfied with things about us. As the inheritance unfolds before the believer, his mind becomes occupied with it; by seeking the things which are above, he grows into deeper acquaintance with them, and richer joy in them. A heart satisfied with surrounding things is the great obstruction to spiritual progress, but by going on our hearts become enlarged, by following the Lord we know Him. It is impossible "to go to possess" with a divided heart. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." (2 Tim. ii. 4.)

Quiet, yet persistent energy of soul is that to which the Christian should address himself. Every day that Israel allowed the enemy to continue in his strongholds, or to return from his hiding-places and re-establish himself in the land, was a day lost; and each such day rendered more difficult the "going to possess" which was incumbent upon them. And while every step in true devotedness to God is real positive gain, every day spent in spiritual idleness is a fresh difficulty to be overcome. There is a deep needs be for cultivating an habitual

earnestness, a growth of that spirit which turns to heavenly things without effort. We see those whom we feel to be devoted to God, whom we recognize as His mighty men of valour, living in the atmosphere of His presence, and acting in the vigour of His Spirit. But they did not attain to their spiritual strength in a moment. Were not the young men who had overcome the wicked one once "babes?" (1 Jno. ii.) Did they learn to "endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ," without training? St. Paul tells us that he kept under his body and brought it into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27), and we can see even in him greater spiritual strength towards the end of his course than at the beginning.

Have we in any way by the grace of God's Spirit conquered the proneness there is in us to occupy ourselves with the things that surround us, that idleness of the soul which is "slack to go to possess"? Alas! how many a Christian, even while knowing that there are described in God's counsels great and glorious things, contents himself with unreality of soul, is satisfied with passing much of his life without truly living in the power of the blessings wherewith he is blessed in the heavenly places in Christ. How hard is it to so master the spirit as unweariedly "to go to possess." The inertness of our nature, its utter inaptitude to divine things, its contrariety of tastes and desires, its positive hatred to them, besides the exterior world which continually pours its attractions at the gates of our senses, are used by the adversary to dwarf our growth, "in grace, and in

the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and all conduce to our "slackness." As a soldier may invigorate his companions so may the Christian help his comrades; and we are told to exhort one another daily, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. May none be content with the assurance "all things are yours," but rise up in the energy of God's Spirit to the present dwelling in their power. "How long are ye slack to go to possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?"

There is all the difference between possessing and knowing, that there was between Israel's hearing the cities of their inheritance read at Shiloh, and dwelling in them. Possessing is dwelling in the power of what we know. It is practically driving out the enemy. The purpose to possess must lead to conflict. We see this in the example of Paul the apostle, a man determined to know nothing among men but Christ and Him crucified; it was thus he faced the enemy who was leading captive the Galatian Christians. Again we see him face to face with the foe at Colosse; we hear of him solitary in Asia for Christ's sake, yet nothing is allowed to move him. Possessing is essentially practical, and necessarily involves diligence of heart. In one sense we resemble Israel, who had a larger extent of territory given them than they dwelt in, and, indeed, the more fully we realize our heavenly portion the more we feel how little of it we practically make ours.

We speak of Israel's possessing their land flowing

with milk and honey, but that land gives a feeble idea of the heavenly places and spiritual abundance. The Canaanitish foes resemble the Christian's spiritual enemies only in measure. Signs and symbols are insufficient to convey the reality of spiritual things to the mind; language fails to express the deep feelings of the heart: it is the Spirit only who searcheth the deep things of God, and that Spirit only who reveals them to us. (1 Cor. ii. 10).

The land having been made over to Israel and divided to each tribe according to the order the Lord saw well, the people "gave an inheritance to Joshua, the son of Nun, among them," and thus ended the apportioning of the inheritance.

XVIII.

THE SINNER'S REFUGE.

JOSHUA Ch. xx.

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

THE inheritance having been distributed among the tribes, it was needful, in order to preserve the holiness of the land, that a refuge should be provided from the avenger's hand.

The city of refuge was ordained by God for the security of him who slew his neighbour unawares, and, when once within its gates, the slayer was preserved from vengeance by the very laws which demanded his blood so long as he was outside the city. The gates of the city were always open, for the object in providing the city was that "Every slayer may flee thither." (Deut. xix. 3.) The surrounding country was so laid out that the high-roads ran towards its gates, and, as the city was built upon an elevated spot, there could be no difficulty in finding the way; it was so plain, that wayfaring men, though fools, could not err therein.

Need drove the slayer to the open gates of the city, he knew that the avenger of blood was upon his track, he fled for life, leaving family and home. "All that a

man hath he will give for his life." And when the sinner realizes coming judgment he dare not remain still. Let any man believe that his eternal safety is at stake, and all that is most pleasant upon earth fails to appease him, all that is dearest to detain him. Indifference would have been out of the question with the slayer who knew the avenger of blood sought him, but his doom was near if he sheltered himself under a false security, trusting that he should not be discovered. As the gates of the city were open day and night, and as the city was expressly provided by God for the slayer, the blood of him, who tampered with his safety and perished by the avenger's hand, was upon his own head. It is false peace which ruins so many, who lulling themselves into a mistaken security, trifle with God's justice, and put off for a "more convenient season" that journey, which the man believing his condemnation and the irrevocable decree of God, dares not for a moment delay. And so they perish, notwithstanding the gates of mercy are wide open to receive them; and justly perish, for they wilfully reject the provision God Himself has made for them.

Long and toilsome might have been the slayer's journey to the city provided for his need; he might have had to drag a weak body up the weary mountain road; his strength might have failed, he might have fallen by the way, the avenger might have been stronger and swifter than he, but Jesus is more than the sinner's refuge from judgment; He is the life, and for those who are in Him

there is no death. To endeavour to prepare oneself for mercy, is to suppose an intermediate stage to eternal safety, and to ignore the Lord Jesus as the Salvation of God. At this present hour every man either has the Son of God and life, or he has the wrath of God abiding on him. The slayer knew that the way to the city of refuge was made by God's appointment, and, with vengeance in pursuit, hastened unto it, using all his energy for escape. We are "without strength," but He who trusts in Christ is safe immediately. Well, it is for them who feel their utter helplessness as well as their eternal peril, to them the Lord Jesus is precious indeed.

Out of Christ God has no mercy for man. It would be impossible for Him, having given His Son, to give eternal life to any save through Him. It is a reproach upon God's love and righteousness to think of safety but through Him, who "was made sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." And more than this, the death of Christ has sealed the condition of man; "if one died for all then were all dead." The cross declared the end of man in the flesh in the sight of God, for Christ, the holy One, taking man's place was forsaken of God. The Lord Jesus became responsible for man and died unto sin. And now those who submit to God's righteousness as seen in the cross of Christ, trust in Christ who died and is risen. Justice could not be set aside in the case of the manslayer for the purposes of mercy, for the laws of God would be broken, His government overruled. "He

that despised Moses' law died without mercy." Vain for the sinner is the thought of a pardon at the day of judgment; shall the eternal majesty of God be trifled with? God has declared that save by Christ there is no forgiveness, no salvation for man, and terrible will be their doom, endless the punishment of which they will be thought worthy, who presume for deliverance save by the blood of Christ.

God set apart the city of refuge for the slayer, hence, upon the principles of His government, he who entered therein was safe. Christ has abundantly satisfied the claims of God's justice upon the sinner, so that now man's condemnation lies in rejecting Christ. God is richly glorified in the blood of His own dear Son, about the terrible question of human guilt, which is therefore now no longer an obstruction to mercy, alas! the obstruction lies in the hardness of the human heart, which will not come unto Christ for life. Terrible contemplation! Christ the Son of God has died for sinners, and has risen, and God gives eternal life, and men, though assenting to this unspeakable grace, live on in their state of death, without God, without Christ—the wrath of God abiding on them.

The security of the slayer within the walls of the city of refuge gives only a faint and imperfect idea of the believer's security in Christ. He might have wandered without the city walls and been exposed to immediate destruction. At the death of the High-Priest he returned from the Levite-city to his own home, where he was ex-

posed to the danger of committing a fresh offence; but there is no return from being in Christ. The believer in Christ is more than sheltered from vengeance, he is justified from all things. Christ bore our sins in His own body on the tree, He endured God's wrath against sin when He hung there; and now God has raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavens. Justice can make no further claim upon those who have suffered the penalty of its sentence and borne its wrath, and this Christ has done, and being risen from the dead dieth no more, death hath no longer dominion over Him. His perfect acceptance into the heavens is the believer's acceptance, who is accepted in Him. By Him God can be just and the justifier of all who believe in Him. Christ risen is the measure of their deliverance who trust in Him. What a salvation is this! The apostle prays that "The eyes of our understanding may be enlightened that we may know * * * what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. i. 18, 19, 20.)

The Christian, besides being justified, is also brought into a new state; he has for ever passed out of one city into another. He has been, by God's power, transferred from his former condition as a man in Adam, and is put "in Christ." Death is the penalty of the first condition. "In Adam all die," but "He that is in Christ Jesus is a

new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." The manslayer who entered the city of refuge was not changed, he was merely in a place of safety; the man in Christ is a new creation. He lives before God in another existence distinct from that life which as a man in Adam he received from the hands of his Creator. The Christian's life is that of the Son of God. Living in a new life, a life which is perfectly free, according to God's own mind and requirements is far more than security. Those who are in Christ have died with Christ, passed with Him through death, and are risen with Him. Vengeance—all the wrath of God against sin—overtook the Lord Jesus when He on the cross by His own free will took our place and penalty. His death teaches us to reckon ourselves dead. His life is the believer's life. "This is the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." "Your life is hid with Christ in God." The believer in the Lord Jesus is thus privileged and exalted. He is brought into nearness to God beyond that which Adam in Paradise knew—beyond that known by even the elect angels. The slayer entered the Levite-city, and those appointed to teach Israel God's word were his continual company; the man who trusts in Christ is one of God's family, an heir of God and joint heir with Christ.

What unmingled privilege and grace is theirs who are *in Christ!* What mercy, what love is God's to the chief of sinners! With what wisdom has He turned the

depths of man's sin and ruin into an occasion for the display of His glory.

The claims of God's justice having been fully met, Divine righteousness having been perfectly satisfied, the gates of mercy are now flung wide open and God declares His own character of love; He Himself beseeches, invites sinners to be partakers of His grace. Surely there was a voice appealing to the slayer, in the open gates of the city of refuge, and what a voice speaks now from heaven! Love now cries aloud from the throne of the majesty on high. The Lord Jesus who is seated there proclaims Himself the Life for man guilty and hell-deserving.

The cities of refuge were appointed for those who had unwittingly and without malice slain their neighbours; but how different the terms of our salvation! At wilful enmity to God, every thought and purpose being in opposition to Him, God commended His love to us by the gift of His own Son.

He who as a slayer entered the city of refuge was justified. Such an one accepted the offered salvation, and was saved by fath. Faith impelled him upon the road, faith led him within the gates. But of what avail would the knowledge of the sentence, the knowledge of the way, the knowledge of the open gates have been, had there not been beyond this personal faith which applied all to the slayer's own need?

XIX.

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION.

JOSHUA Ch. xxi. 1—42.

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Ps. xvi. 5.

THE provision for the slayer's need being fully met, the inheritance of the Levites is set out. "Unto the tribe of Levi, Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance." "The sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance." (Ch. xiii. 33, 14.) Thus, though "scattered in Israel," according to the prophecy of Jacob, and possessing but a small territory, their inheritance crowns the blessings bestowed upon Israel, shines the brightest of them all.

To the tribe of Levi was committed the service of the sanctuary, the custody of Jehovah's law, and the culture of the hearts of His people. "They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law." (Deut. xxxiii. 10.) They were the influencing power in Israel, and their influence flowed from the nearness of their position to God.

With the material blessings of Israel before our eye —their land flowing with milk and honey, and fed with depths springing out of valleys and hills—it is not diffi-

cult to discern the peculiar position occupied by Levi. And, spiritually understood, in the Levites' inheritance we see the believer's most perfect portion; for while we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ—while we have in Him pleasures bestowed upon us for evermore, we have beyond all blessings which are conferred upon us through Christ—Christ Himself. Indeed we are brought into the blessings of Christianity that we may delight in Christ. God has saved us and brought us to Himself, for no less an end than being like the Lord and knowing as we are known. (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) His grace towards us reaches even beyond deliverance from wrath and entrance into life; thus while we contemplate His mercy—the forgiveness of our sins, the end of the first creation, death with, resurrection with Christ—the Spirit of God dwelling in us would have us reach forth, in order that we may realize and abide in our portion *now*. "That I may know Him," is the aim of the energy of the new life. Paul so longed to grasp his portion that he would fain have passed clean out of this earth to reach it, for Christ in glory was to him experimentally what He is verily to all believers, "the prize of the high calling of God."

Every event recorded in the Book of Joshua has a voice in itself, and also in the order in which the events are recorded there is instruction, as in the inheritance of Levi following the cities of refuge. A similar order is usually to be found in the experience of God's people, who most frequently learn their need of Christ before

learning what Christ is for them. Our sins, the discovery of self, learning divine righteousness by His Spirit, enhance Christ to us as our Saviour, Acceptance, Life; but let us seek to go on to acquaintance with Him in His own intrinsic excellence. May it not be that some having full assurance that they are in the city where the Levites dwell, use little diligence to acquire the joy of their Levite inheritance?

The fugitive from vengeance, who entered the City of Refuge, would be at the first necessarily occupied with his own deliverance and safety, and would bless God fervently for having Himself provided and set apart the city for men in his case, and thus—though in a right way—self would be before him; but the Levite who *dwelt in* the city, and was at home there, was there that he might be free for God's service; he was called into association with God, and it was for him to consider the depths of the word, and to ponder the service of the sanctuary. Do we know more than salvation by Christ? Are we, while rejoicing as with the fugitive saved, yet also learning of God as with the Levite? And if while blessing God for salvation we are also rejoicing in Christ, in what degree have we attained to the *fulness* of the believer's portion? We find some among the Levites fulfilling a more hallowed service; some handling more sacred instruments of the sanctuary than others; and there are degrees even among those who know Christ, as their portion.

There can be no other way of learning Christ than by

communion with Him through the word. We discover the heart—the character—of an earthly friend by intimacy; and in proportion as his moral excellence is beyond us, we must grow up into his stature before we can appreciate him. His gifts we may comprehend, perhaps, for the gift may be appreciated in itself or by its adaptability to our wants, but the motive and grace of the giver is not so easily discovered.

All Israel stood before God by virtue of the sacrifices, but the tribe of Levi alone had "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire" as "their inheritance." We may see God's love in giving His Son to die for us, yet miss spiritual intercourse with Him.

The Levite could only dimly read God's thoughts about Christ through the shadows of the law; in us God's Spirit dwells, and teaches us all things. The Levite was set apart for the service of the sanctuary and the contemplation of God's word, and this should be our work, for thereto we are separated by God to Himself. The whole of that economy with which the Levite was busied set forth Christ in His intrinsic excellence, and as He is esteemed by God in His work for His people. We may well desire the service which attaches itself to the Lord Himself, and that separatedness which finds occupation in Him only.

When the Lord is seen, by faith, in His excellence, the glory of His light dims everything else. Saul of Tarsus saw His face eclipsing the brightness of the noonday sun, and thenceforth was no longer for the earth. The Lord

in the heavens instructed him not only concerning the glory, but opened to him the wonder of His own heart there. Saul thereupon counted all things loss for Christ, and many years afterwards, as Paul, he wrote, "Yea, doubtless, and *I count;*" his mind had not changed; rather, we should say, his energy had increased.

One who is now present with the Lord, "absent from the body," remarked, "Next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of His personal love to ourselves (the Lord increase it in our hearts!), nothing more helps us to desire to be with Him than the discovery of *Himself.* If one might speak for others, it is this we *want*, and it is this we *covet.* We know our need, but we can say, The Lord knows our desire."

When the inheritance of the tribe of Levi is marked out, and they fill their cities and dwell there, nothing more remains to be done for the Israel God loved, for the people He had brought up from the land of bondage into the land of promise; and there follows Rest.

XX.

REST.

JOSHUA Ch. xxi., 43—45.

"If Joshua had given them rest, then would he (David) not afterwards have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (Heb. iv. 8, 9.)

THE rest here spoken of may be taken in one sense as the conclusion of the book of Joshua. What follows, morally considered, is hardly a development of the history of Israel—certainly it is not going on in the Lord's strength, but conveys rather a warning to such as having a promise given them of entering into rest seem to come short of it (Ch. xxii.), and an exhortation to those who have in spirit entered into rest, to abide in the power of it. (Ch. xxiii. & iv.)

When we have obtained the object of our desires there is rest; the character of rest depends upon the nature of the desire.

In one sense Israel entered Canaan at rest—at rest from the judgment of Egypt—from the pursuit of the destroyer—from the wilderness. All their hopes concerning deliverance from the land of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, and of their reaching the land of promise, were fully realized. Thus, they began their fight in Canaan as God's men of war and in the power

of His liberty; and, having waged Jehovah's wars for many years—as it is generally understood seven years, which implies a perfect period of an earthly kind, "the land rested." (Ch. xi.) Conquest produced rest from warfare; but as the rest produced by conquest could only be sustained by incessant watchfulness, and would be lost to them if they failed to exterminate the enemy, it was not complete.

It is the Christian's portion to enjoy present rest through Christ's victory over sin, death, and Satan, which is illustrated in Israel's rest upon entering the land of promise. It is the Christian's portion by faith to realize a full deliverance from the judgment of the world by the precious blood of Christ, and to know that Christ being risen has broken the power of death and Satan, neither of which now have power over His redeemed people. The Christian knows that he is already in Christ in the heavenly places, and, in the power of this liberty and rest, he is called upon to fight against spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places under the banner of the risen Lord. The Christian is enabled also to enjoy the peace of his Shiloh, to have seasons of communion with God's people, to worship with them, notwithstanding there are enemies in his spiritual Canaan. But, although all these blessings are his to enjoy and dwell in, yet, while he is still upon this earth, there is a rest which he is anticipating, a rest which he has not at present entered; the rest of God is his hope.

Every character of rest which Israel enjoyed resulted from divine faithfulness. The rest which is here described was of a different character from what they had previously enjoyed; it was the fulfilment of all that Jehovah promised to their fathers. It anticipates a day when, every foe of God's people being subdued, all the blessings which are promised them in Christ shall be realized.

Rest is incomplete so long as blessings are unenjoyed; and before it is said, "the Lord gave them rest," it is said,

"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers;

"And they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

"And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers;

"And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them, and the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.

"There failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

Jehovah had been unwearied in bringing Israel into the enjoyment of their portion in the land of promise. He came down into the land of their bonds; He was afflicted there in their afflictions; He ransomed them from captivity. Having given them the spirit of pilgrims, He guided them as a flock through the wilderness, where He fed them daily, went before them, and was their

rearward. He healed their wilderness backslidings, and forgave their questioning His grace. He brought them through the river into the promised land, fought for them, gave them victory over all their enemies, and made the land their possession. All that Jehovah gave Israel to anticipate was now actually fulfilled to them.

The Christian is already blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, yet he is a man of anticipation, "We are saved by hope." Did he not enjoy complete peace and rest with God in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, he could not hope for that which awaits him. As far as his salvation is concerned everything is complete; the precious blood of his redemption was shed many, many years ago. He has already entered into rest about sin by faith in that precious blood, but, so far as the longings of the new nature are concerned, it is, with him, anticipation still. "Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. viii. 24, 25.)

The Christian is not yet transformed into the image of Christ, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 Jno. iii. 2.) He is not yet morally like the Lord, although by beholding His glory he is day by day changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

(2 Cor. iii. 18.) He has the Spirit of God within him, yet he is compassed about with infirmity, and with the whole groaning and travailing creation, groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. (Rom. viii. 21—23.) But the promise is sure, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (1 Cor. xv. 49); and he is looking for the "Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." (Phil. iii. 21.) If true to the sympathies of Christ, he is anticipating the day of His glory. Longing to behold His glory as the Lord prayed the Father (Jno. xv. 24); expecting with Christ when Christ's foes shall be made His footstool; hoping for the day when the name of Jesus shall be confessed by every tongue, and when every knee shall bow to Him and own Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He is anticipating the time when Israel's twelve tribes shall own their once rejected Messiah, when the north and south shall give up the people who are now nationally dead, when their land shall once more flow with milk and honey, and shine with God's favour, when the groans of creation shall be hushed, and Israel shall sing to their Lord; "Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God even our own God shall bless us, God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him."

In a word, the Christian is expecting all that shall accrue to Christ's glory, which His precious death has

purchased, and for which He Himself waits. "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." Vast as are the present blessings of God's people, there are longings of heart to be satisfied; great and precious as are their present enjoyment of divine blessings, yet "Now we see as through a glass, darkly—as in a riddle—now we know in part,"—"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is part shall be done away."

Our present rest resembles that previously spoken of, which had to be retained by ceaseless vigilance, rather than the rest which is pictured here. "There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." Fightings without and within will cease before long; idols and their names will come no more into remembrance. The strivings of sin and the buffetings of Satan have an end for God's people; it shall be said of all—of the weakest—"The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand."

There is a day to dawn (and it may be at the doors!) when, after this world and the lust thereof shall have passed away, it shall be proved that the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and, resting in God's rest, heart shall respond to heart with joyful praise—"There has failed not aught of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken; all is come to pass."

XXI.

EXPEDIENCY.

JOSHUA Ch. xxii.

"Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee,"

"The path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—Prov. iv. 25, 18.

THE history of the two and a-half tribes is a warning to Christians who would fain be guided by expediency instead of by faith in the words of promise. In considering their story, the Lord's first exhortation, "Arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people unto the land which I do give them," must be borne in mind; and also that the tabernacle was set up, the law read, and the camp pitched on "this side Jordan."

Their history occupies a distinct place throughout the book of Joshua, for when Israel crossed the Jordan they had already chosen their possessions.

From Numbers xxxii. we learn why these tribes inherited on "the other side Jordan," and it is well to ponder beginnings. "Now the children of Reuben, and the children of Gad, had a very great multitude of cattle: and when they saw that the land of Jazer, and the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle; * * * said they, If we have found grace in thy

sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan." God had greatly enriched them upon their way to the promised land, and they preferred sitting down and enjoying their riches to pressing forwards to the inheritance. Expediency instead of faith guided them. The cities which they saw had greater attractions for them than the soldiers' tents on the other side of the river. Settling down, let it assume what form it may, is a sorrowful thing, but in whom has not the will of the flesh cried out, "Bring me not over Jordan"? However, faith inherits "yonder and forwards," in nearness to God.

The soul of Moses was stirred within him at their proposition, which he regarded as coming short of God's inheritance; he compared their desire to the sin of the false spies at Eschol, and saw in it an earnest of Israel's reaping again those bitter fruits which were appointed to them upon their despising the promised land. Grieved at their spirit, he said, "Shall ye sit here? And, wherefore, discourage ye the heart of the children of Israel from going over into the land which the Lord hath given them. * * * And they came near unto him," and said that they would leave their wives and children and cattle behind, and go themselves to the war! Expediency argues smoothly, and finds many ready ways of gaining its object; but it is a poor thing to fight God's battles unless for Him alone; for where the treasure is there will the heart be also. Let such as are not in spirit inheriting "yonder and forwards," and who are not

fighting the fight of faith with a whole heart, consider what it is to "sit here," for they not only "discourage the heart" of their brethren by their ease-seeking, but are themselves not far off departing from God.

The mind of these men was made up. "We will not inherit with them on yonder side Jordan or forward * * * our inheritance is fallen to us on this side Jordan, eastward." The heart by degrees establishes itself in its wishes, and at length openly expresses its desires; it resists warnings, and then becomes resolute in its own wilfulness. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." One false step usually begets another,—evil leads to evil; these tribes, beginning with the spirit of expediency, added to expediency wilfulness, and to wilfulness, schism. "We will not inherit with them." To carry out their purpose they were prepared to make a breach in Israel. "We" and "them," said they, of Jehovah's one undivided family. Jehovah had given one inheritance to His people, but they would have their inheritance, and Israel should have theirs! "We will not return unto our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance."

However we may admire the zeal of the forty thousand, who for their brethren's sake fought on the Lord's side of Jordan—and surely they had their reward—it cannot be denied that the two and a-half tribes sent them to fight the Lord's battles in order to compromise matters. "We will pass over armed before the Lord

into the land of Canaan, that the possession of our inheritance on this side Jordan may be ours." When a believer bargains to serve God in order to retain a self-chosen position, it is certain he will not do even one-half of what he promises, for expediency is departure from God. Instead of sending over "every man armed for war," these tribes sent only forty thousand, considerably more than half their men of war remaining behind to protect their treasure. (See census Numb. xxvi.)

The Lord having now given rest to the brethren of the two and a-half tribes as He promised, Joshua said to them, "Return ye * * * unto the land of your possession * * * on the other side Jordan." And after enjoining them to keep the law of God, and to be true to Him, he sent them away with blessing. "Return with much riches unto your tents, and with very much cattle, with silver and with gold, and with brass and with iron, and with very much raiment." There is a blessing for any child of God who follows the Lord with a true heart, even if he do so only for one day, and there ought to be grace enough among his companions to own it, even if he afterwards go astray. But departure from any degree of nearness to God is grievous, as the forty thousand returning from the children of Israel out of Shiloh, the place of worship, found it. In a sense, it may be the Lord accepted them in the position which they had chosen (end of v. 9). The Lord did not cast them off. He acts towards His people according to His own standard of faithfulness. "He remaineth faithful."

When these men of war, who had fought and endured hardness with their brethren, began to return to their self-chosen position, they had not gone far before they made a halt and questioned among themselves. Conscience spoke. Yet they did not condemn their course, and give it up; indeed, the result of their pause only developed their original spirit. They did not adopt the course which the nine and a-half tribes afterwards suggested. "Pass over unto the land of the possession of the Lord, wherein the Lord's tabernacle dwelleth;" but instead, "They built a great altar to see to." "When they came into the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, they built there an altar by Jordan." Sight, not faith, ruled. Their great altar was not the Lord's altar, it was only a pattern of it, and its chief value would be in its evidencing that once they had been with their brethren at Shiloh. If the two and a-half tribes had only felt that they demonstrated the untenableness of their position on the "other side Jordan," by building an altar to witness where they had been, they might have been spared going into captivity when they did go. But if they could not have "the Lord's tabernacle" except by going over into "the land of the possession of the Lord," they were determined to have their "inheritance." Their affections—their wives and little ones, and their riches were on the other side Jordan, whither they returned, and so were found out, as Moses had warned them.

Perhaps in time to come, they reasoned, the children

of the nine and a-half tribes may say, "What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben, and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord, so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord." They felt unmistakeably that the Jordan was a border. It was plain to them that crossing it appeared like leaving the Lord, with His holy tabernacle and its blessings, and that their return was fraught with danger, but as they considered the danger, they manifested the state of their souls by placing in the lips of their brethren bitter words. Their brethren had never suggested divisions among the Israel of Jehovah, nor that the Jordan was a separation, nor that their children should cease fearing the Lord.

The believer who leaves his more devoted companions for some worldly association, invariably lays the blame of the consequences upon those who abide with God: blaming godly people is the usual salve for an uneasy conscience. "Beloved if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 Jno. iii. 21.) Altars of "witness,"—great altars to see to—are, alas! in many hearts and associations where once there was real devotedness to Christ. People talk of what they used to be, how they served God, how they enjoyed seasons of heartfelt worship, and by the sign of the past would prove their present portion. Would that they had the honesty to confess their fault and to return to the only source of strength. The deceitfulness of sin is

that which hardens the soul. The spirit of expediency is utterly contrary to God; yet who has not listened to his heart, bidding him choose some easy place, and to excuses for abiding where he ought not? We have to learn that we must go up to the position of faith—whatever it may be—which God sets before us, and to refuse the invitations of our own lusts, which bid us endeavour to bring God into our self-chosen land of sight.

We can admire the earnestness of the two and a-half tribes when they said, if we have built the altar in "rebellion or in transgression against the Lord, save us not this day;" and the desire of the forty thousand for their children; yet, why should there be "fear of this thing" —their forsaking God? Simply because they were on the other side Jordan. When we begin to please ourselves, we are not good judges of our actions.

What a poor thing was their altar! It was not for worship; they did not mean that "burnt-offering, or meat-offering, or peace-offering," should ever be placed upon it. No sweet savour was to arise from it, nor were gladdened hearts to surround it. What then was it for? "To see to!"

When the tidings of the altar of Ed reached Israel they assembled at Shiloh—at the one altar of Jehovah—beholding in the erection of a second, nothing less than rebellion against the Lord of the twelve tribes. The zeal of Israel was stirred, and as when the heart is zealous for God in the contemplation of the failings of others, it

remembers with a chastened spirit its own sins, so "The iniquity of Peor," "the trespass of Achan," with all their bitter fruits, were present before them. Israel, moreover, judged themselves before attempting to judge the wrong doers, they felt that the seeds of the very evils they mourned over, in the two and a-half tribes, and which they were assembled to root out, were even among them. Such is the spirit in which the believer, when in communion with God, laments the desertion of his fellow soldier, and deals with evil. Judgment must begin at home, and who is guiltless? And where the sin is a controversy (as was this in the mind of Israel) between Jehovah and their brethren, great will be the contrition and brokenness of spirit in those who have grace given to them, to be zealous for God's glory.

It is well to note the end as well as the beginning of the path of expediency. After the lapse of some years, the prosperity of Israel, its Gilgal, was changed for Bochim (weeping). The sorrowful time of national declension had come. God, filled with pity, raised up judges to deliver his erring people; and at that time we read of a day of testing (Jud. ch. 5). Where were the two and a-half tribes then? Had the great altar of sight inspired them to devotion? "Gilead abode beyond Jordan;" remained at home—at ease. For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Resolutions were made by the men of war, but nothing was done. "Why abodest thou among the sheep folds to hear the bleating of the flocks?" The piping of the

shepherds was preferred to the trumpet of war. Hard, indeed, must be the necessity which rouses an ease-seeking believer into action. The feet of them who prefer gain to godliness generally tread the path of expediency to its mournful end.

Nought but looking stedfastly to Christ can preserve the soul from spiritual declension. Former zeal, riches, spoils, blessings, having once surrounded the altar of worship—having once trodden the land of the Lord's inheritance, will not avail. In a time when so many turn aside, thrice happy they who inherit "forwards," and who endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ.

Later in Israel's history we find the two and a-half tribes gone into captivity, and the land of Gilead lost beyond recovery. (1 Kings xxii.) "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Heb. iv. 1.)

XXII.

JOSHUA'S LAST WORDS.

JOSHUA Ch. xxiii. xxiv.

THE last words of this servant of God possess a peculiar emphasis, and demand especial attention. When Israel hearkened to the last exhortations of their captain, their privileges had to be retained, their position kept.

How different was this exhortation from that given before the Jordan was crossed! The freshness of their early zeal had passed away, and they were settling down among Jehovah's enemies, apathetic to His honour, and to the integrity of their own position. The leaven of the surrounding evil nations was already among them, and had lowered their standard of separation to God, when Joshua exhorted them, "Come not among the nations that remain among you." The gods of these wicked nations had been allowed in their midst, and they were now bidden "not to make mention of their names;" the inheritance itself was for a great part peopled by Jehovah's enemies. "Behold I have divided unto you by lot the nations that remain * * * with all the nations that I have cut off."

What should be felt by the believer to be a terrible word, reached Israel at this time. "If ye in any wise go back." This word now occurs for the first time in

the book of Joshua, but, settling down precedes backsliding, and they had not come to need such a warning suddenly. At Jericho evil had entered their camp; then with an upright spirit it was summarily judged, and the camp cleansed. At Gibeon a worse thing happened, the unwatchful princes were deceived into alliance with the wicked, from which they could not free themselves. Afterwards the enervated men of war of Judah and Ephraim tolerated the heathen among them, and at last, when the seven tribes received their inheritance, it was the land with its inhabitants also,—"the nations that remain."

What was "going back?" It was leaving the place of separation to God. It was entering into alliance with evil. Making marriages with the nations and uniting in worshipping their gods. If they would go back into what God hated His strength would be taken from them, and the very powers which they once overcame would become their oppressors. "Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you, but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you."

Our own day is a day of going back; going back into worldliness, into superstition, into infidelity, into abominations from which to deliver themselves and their fellows, and, above all, the name of the Lord, soldiers of

Christ in earlier times freely shed their blood. The mass of Christians is enervated. There is but little power to withstand evil, although here and there a noble spirit rises up. Our inheritance is now peopled with enemies, and the chief thing required of the soldier of Christ is that he disentangle himself from the foes which surround him; that he, in spirit and in practice, be separate for the Lord. "We wrestle * * * against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (heavenly) places." But if there be a desire "to cleave unto the Lord," the promise is still before us, and the feeblest believer may prove His faithfulness who spake it. "The Lord your God is He that fighteth for you as He hath promised you." One shall chase a thousand; the might of the foe is of no moment, for the Lord cannot fail. A heart for the Lord was the remedy set before Israel—"Take good heed therefore unto yourselves that ye love the Lord your God." True devotedness to Christ frees the soul from tyrants and makes it victorious over oppression, and as it deepens in love to Him, it will gain greater victories. The Lord never exhorts, never bids us deliver ourselves, without showing us the path of strength. He does not array evil before us, except that in the spirit of self-judgment, and in the power of His might, we may free ourselves for Him. Would that God's people, who lament the state of Christians in this present day, might "Take good heed unto themselves that they love the Lord their God,"

each then would become a centre of strength and a lamp holding forth the words of life, displaying the glorious character of the Lord. Dwelling upon evil only defiles the spirit, we should betake ourselves to the contemplation of the good. Jericho, Gibeon, the past alliances, the present condition of the mass of Israel could not be changed, melancholy as all these things were. But bright the light, and sure the promise to the faithful heart.

Each believer will readily set his seal to the following words:—"Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof;" and let us also lay to heart the warning which follows, a warning especially suitable for "these last days" in which there are "ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness." (Jude 4.) For God, faithful in grace, is also faithful in rebuke.

Having thus warned the people, Joshua finally called Israel together at Shechem, and "they presented themselves before God," and heard from Him how he had been their strength, their stay, their shield, from the very first. The Lord brought to their remembrance His purpose towards them before they thought about Him, when in "the old time" He took them from the idols on the other side of the flood. He reminded them of their land of bondage, from which by His own hand they were "brought out," and how He had led them

through the waters of the Red Sea when their pursuers were overthrown. He recalled His gracious ways to them in the wilderness—His delivering them both from the Rebel (the Amorite), and from the Accuser, "I would not hearken unto Balaam, therefore He blessed you still." He spoke to them of Canaan—of its victories, "I delivered them into your hand"—and of its bounties, "I have given you a good land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them, of vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not, to eat." From first to last all was God's own doing for them, His own love to them, and with His mercies spread before them, they were told, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth."

If Israel had felt the force of Jehovah's words, they would have bowed to Him, remembering that He had chosen them, and that their ability to serve Him was given by him; but self-confidently they replied, "We will also serve the Lord, for He is our God," yet demonstrating their real condition, by not cleansing themselves from their idols. "And Joshua said unto the people, ye cannot serve the Lord, for He is an Holy God; He is a jealous God," when they again, stout-heartedly answered, "Nay, but we will serve the Lord." To Joshua's renewed entreaty to put away the strange gods which were among them, and to incline their hearts unto the Lord God of Israel, their response was, "The Lord our God we will serve, and His voice will we obey;" but the idols remained

among them, and the wicked nations were not destroyed. Idols may be brought by a believer even into the holy places, and if idols are in the heart, all our proposed zeal will not save us from serving them. Joshua might indeed say, "As for me and my house we will serve the Lord," for his heart and life agreed with his words, and God's grace was present before his soul.

It was by the old oak or monument of Shechem Joshua spake thus; thither Jacob had repaired in former years, and buried his household gods; there Israel had set up the law (Shechem lies between Ebal and Gerizim); and there, at the close of their captain's life, they stand again, and promise obedience to the Lord. We, doubtless, have our memorable oaks of Shechem, where, at times of deep heart-stirring, we have honestly longed to be all for God and his Christ. "And Joshua wrote all these words in the book of the law of God," and "took a great stone and set it there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the Lord * * * And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us, it shall, therefore, be a witness unto you lest ye deny your God."

"So Joshua let the people depart every man to his inheritance."

"And it came to pass after these things that Joshua the servant of the Lord died." The elders of his eventful day have departed; Eleazer's bones are laid with those of his father Aaron, and they mingle in the grave with

the dust of Joseph and his progenitor Jacob. The sons of Heth who sold, and Abraham who bought, are none the richer for their exchanges. The earliest inhabitants of Canaan, where are they? Man's short history upon this perishing world is traced to the grave.

Our Captain has entered the heavens. He will shortly call His people up on high. The first resurrection may burst upon us before our bodies are sown in the earth. God's eternal spring may begin for us without our bodies passing through death's cold winter. "We shall not all sleep" (1 Cor. xv.) But whether we sleep or wake, we are the Lord's. Let us, then, not live for this world, but for Christ, the Resurrection and the Life.

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